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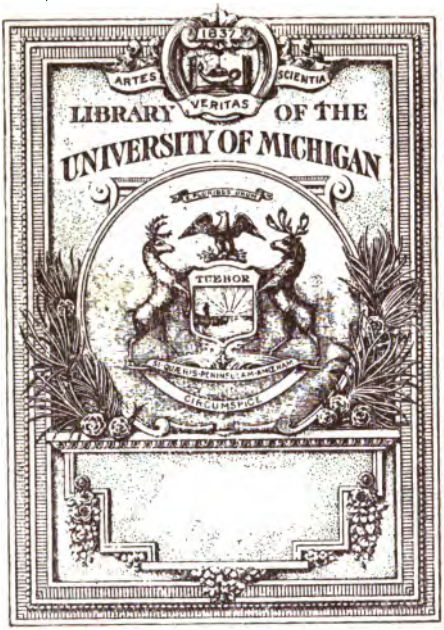
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THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

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THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

BY IVOR J. C. BROWN, B.A.
LATE SCHOLAR OF BALLIOL COLLEGE AND LECTURER FOR THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY TUTORIAL CLASSES COMMITTEE

RICHARD COBDEN-SANDERSON
17 THAVIES INN

"Words are wise men's counters, they do but reckon by them; but they are the money of fools."

Thomas Hobbes.

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INTRODUCTION

At the present moment Democracy is "booming" in the sense that everybody talks about it; but, in as far as it is associated with Parliamentary Government, it is very largely discredited. It is at once the hope of the workers, and their despair. The idea is worshipped and the fact deplored. There is a widespread feeling that everything is wrong and an equally widespread uncertainty as to why it has gone wrong. And we are faced as a result with a paradoxical situation in which the more blunders we, of the nominally democratic countries, make, the more do we call upon the name of democracy. Those who are most loud in their protests against conduct which certainly seems to have popular support are also most loud in their praises of democracy. We are all well acquainted with the individual who rises at every meeting on every subject to suggest that the proper remedy is "democracy."

One thing at least is obvious. The word has come to mean nothing; or rather it means so much that it means nothing at all. Exactly the same trouble has arisen with other political terms. We all believe in liberty, but very few of us agree as to what liberty is. The word

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Socialist is applied to thousands of people who detest each other's politics and economics as heartily as they detest capitalism. In my experience of adult education, I have seen over and over again the intellectual devastation caused by the use of undefined abstract terms. I have heard people arguing for hours about a phrase which they have never troubled to dissect. Often they would have found an agreement in five minutes if they had stopped to discover their respective interpretations of the term. But the word was a symbol like a national flag; it was the word that roused their loyalty or their animosity; it was for the word they fought and not for the thing. Just as the State, existing because of the individual and for the individual, often swallows him up and destroys him, so the word, existing because of the idea and for the idea, buries its parent beneath a mass of irrelevance. It is from such filial violence that the idea of democracy is being condemned to suffocation.

This book has been written simply as an essay in definition, an attempt to show what democracy, stripped clean of its false clothing, does imply. It is not a constructive book, if by that phrase is meant an effort to solve constitutional and social problems. Each of these problems has a considerable literature of its own and must be dealt with on its own merits. But it is, I hope,

constructive, in so far as no building is safe, however admirably designed, unless it has firm foundations. My ambition has been to discover, or at least to discuss, the essential elements of the democratic idea, and to give a precise content to its phraseology. My readers, if any, will very probably dispute my definitions, but it is a great deal better to fight about definitions than to fight, as we usually do, about nothing at all.

The function of education, especially of adult education, is to my mind predominantly the task of seeking those general principles without which information is barren. It is the putting together of our disjointed fragments of experience and knowledge so that we may understand life more clearly, use it better, and enjoy it more. The world is full of people who, although they have accumulated a great many facts about this subject and about that, are fundamentally uneducated because all their learning is isolated; lacking all sense of proportion and balance, ignorant of the very conception of law, they must inevitably take a distorted view of life. Or, a far worse contingency, their knowledge is remote from life altogether. The naturalist that prefers the stuffed specimen to the living animal; the ornithologist with his paper army of Latin names; the classical specialist who reads the Greek drama to analyse the use of conjunctions and to supply humanity with six volumes upon syntax;

the theologian who devotes a lifetime to the doctrinal controversies of the early Church; the historian who proves conclusively (to the chagrin of another of his kidney) that the events of 845 B.C. really happened in 846 B.C.. Such people, mere fractions of real men and women, can give year after year to the compilation of facts and yet keep those facts utterly outside their emotions. There are naturalists without wonder, scholars without awe, theologians without worship, economists without anger, historians who never laughed or hated or despaired. They may be wise, but who is jealous of their wisdom? It is possible to know everything and understand nothing.

The value of education stands or falls by its capacity to make life fuller and therefore more enjoyable. If it is to help us to a clear outlook and a grasp of principle, it must do two things: it must renounce the pedantry of fruitless specialisation, and it must get below the surface of words to the unchanging level of realities. The world is surfeited with symbols. It needs no more beautiful abstractions and inspiring names, but only the experience for which those stand. In the political sphere we have had far too much praise of democracy as an ideal and too little thought about it as a thing. There are innumerable scraps and pieces of democratic machinery and a common lip-service to the

idea of popular control; what is lacking is the co-ordination of knowledge and the desire to discover general principles. Many people apply themselves every year to the challenge of adult education; they come to it with a passionate enthusiasm and a genuine determination to sacrifice hard-earned leisure to the cause; they want to understand the world they live and work and suffer in, and they are prepared to face real drudgery to gain that understanding. But in the majority of cases, their previous education stopped at the age of thirteen or fourteen and, of necessity, their minds are untrained. They think in terms of words not concepts. So, when they come face to face with the ordinary political thought of our day, they are at once baffled by the formidable phrases, vague and transitory meanings, and the common contempt for precision. Journalism picks up a word like Bolshevism, which ought to mean a great deal, and turns it into an empty vehicle of abuse, a cruel snare for those who are still the servants of nomenclature.

The obvious task for education at the present is to concentrate more upon improving our thinking, than upon increasing our information. Books are far more plentiful now than they were a generation ago, and the keen student, whatever his financial position, can usually get his books, if he makes use of his chances. But a plethora

of books may lead only to a plethora of confusion; reading without judgment is like driving in the dark. Here is another book, but I would make this excuse in its favour. It is written with the sole purpose of encouraging individual thought and criticism. One man who makes his philosophy for himself is worth twenty who take it ready-made from the shelves. If this book sets but a handful of people defining their terms and arguing about first principles, it will have achieved its purpose.

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CHAPTER ONE

Abstract Ideas

The evolution of the human mind is marked by the transition from facts to ideas, from concrete to abstract. A primitive savage could understand the actual difference to his sensations between being at large and being tied up in chains long before he could frame the abstract ideas of liberty and bondage. The history of civilisation is the history of the growing power of ideas, and therefore it is a welcome sign that abstract ideas have attained to-day a wider use and dominion than ever before. There have been episodes in the development of society when a small people such as the Athenians have broken out from the darkness of barbarism into the shining light of ideas and of ideals; but these have been limited episodes, touching only a fraction of the world's population. To-day, however, owing to innumerable causes, the vast majority of men and women of the Western world are more and more

influenced by ideas. Man is a traditional animal, the bond-slave of " that Monster Custom." Yet, even against the rocks of his innate conservatism, new conceptions, continually washed by the tides of education and propaganda, are beginning to prevail. Such great concepts as Liberty and Justice and Democracy have lived for ages, but they have never lived in the minds of so many at one time. They have been the torches to fire rare and mighty conflagrations ; but they have never till now, been the small, steady fires that warm innumerable homes.

Now we have reached an age when all are granted at least a smattering of education, when all have the power and opportunity to read, and when literature of all kinds is comparatively cheap and ready to hand. Abstract nouns are on every lip, Take the first ten lines of any speech or newspaper leader and you will be brought up against as many abstractions. While material interests are still intensely strong, they are being compelled to take cover under ideals, for the very reason that men have come to be as concerned about thoughts as about things, and to be as easily moved to action by idealist inspirations as by realist ambitions. Hypocrisy does, after all, mark a certain stage in moral progress, and it is something that men have begun to be ashamed of force and to mask their baser designs in the fair language of ideals. But,

unfortunately, the growing power of abstract ideas in a world where people are little accustomed to them, makes smooth the way for those who would juggle with those ideas to mystify their audience.

Abstract ideas are the developed mental weapons of man, as high explosives are his developed material weapons. And such weapons may be dangerous to those who use them. So it comes about that the loose and careless handling of an idea may be as hazardous as the loose and careless handling of explosives. If it is madness to play with a substance of whose properties one is ignorant, it is equal madness to play with language and concepts whose exact meanings are undecided. This was realised by one of the world's greatest men at an age when, in one small community, ideas were bandied about with much careless freedom. Socrates, a wandering teacher living at the end of Athens' golden age, came to the conclusion that loose thinking was just as harmful as loose living; indeed far more so, for he held, rightly or wrongly, that loose thinking was the cause of loose living. Accordingly he set to work to eradicate this evil, and his method was to insist that those who used abstract ideas should always be ready and able to define them. Thus, he led his listeners and pupils into many arguments on the real meaning of such abstractions as courage and justice. We, too, live in an age

when abstract ideas are being freely bandied about, the common coinage of a developing popular mind. Yet the number of people who could clearly define the terms they are habitually using must be exceedingly small. Never was there a time more ripe for a new Socratic method. One is tempted to adopt Wordsworth's famous lines on Milton to Socrates or to his great disciple and chronicler,

> Plato, thou shouldst be living at this hour,
> England hath need of thee; she is a fen—

This point can easily be made plain by a single instance. During the last four or five years every article or book on current affairs and every speech by a politician on the state of Europe has had its allusion to the sacred principle of nationality. It sounds well; it sounds on the face of it, quite simple. Yet we cannot pause there. We have got to ask and ask with relentless determination, "What do we mean by nationality?" Who dare wager that one in twenty of our phrase-mongers has a definition ready to hand? They would say after a little hesitation, "Common blood, common race, that sort of thing!" No one denies nationality to Switzerland. But the Swiss have neither common tongue nor common race. Nor have the United States. The Jews have common race and belong to every nation. Well then, common territory?

But that is just the disputed issue. Are all peoples who have common territory to-day to share it for ever? They do not want to, they repudiate their common nationality. After all, what decided the borders of these territories? Strategic frontiers and old artificial treaties often enough, the kind of arrangement that makes the arbitrary border between France and West Flanders. No principle is at work here, and if nationality is based on territorial considerations, it is based on a series of accidents. Obviously the matter is not so simple as it first seemed. In fact, after a Socratic process of whittling away definitions that will not work, it is found that nationality is simply a community of feeling and a consequent act of will. Nations exist because certain groups of people, bound together sometimes by race, sometimes by language, sometimes by religion, sometimes by accidents of frontier and historical tradition, often by combinations of these factors, do feel a sense of unity and will to be a nation. Now let the man who talks so glibly of the "Sacred principle of Nationality," apply this phrase to Ireland. He finds an island geographically a unit, spiritually two countries, and in actual historical fact, a portion of Great Britain. And he may find some of the keenest Irish nationalists, and theorists of nationality at that, insisting that they will have "no partition," emphasising

that is to say, the geographical rather than the volitional aspect of nationality. These facts are not mentioned with any purpose of throwing light on this very dark subject of Ireland, but because they illustrate admirably the dangers of using abstract phrases without very close definition. The concept is the mind's most delicate machinery; for that very reason it demands the most delicate handling.

Another good example is afforded by the word "Progress." This is a relative term; that is to say, its meaning is governed by another term accompanying it. Progress means, by derivation, "going forward," and plainly it is possible to go forward in two or three directions. You can go forward to Heaven or to Hell. To call a man unprogressive, simply means as a rule, that he won't go where you want him to. Towards the end of "Joan and Peter," Mr. Wells rebukes the Chesterton and Belloc school for not being "progressive." This is just begging the very vital question, "What is Progress?" Abstractions undefined are like loose sign-posts swinging in the wind; the traveller can take them as pointing in any direction he chooses to go.

The purpose of this book is to take one of the commonest abstract ideas, one that is claimed as an essential of civilised society, and to attempt to discover by constant definition, its genuine meaning and content. Every one in these days,

except a few honest unbending junkers in each country, makes at least a superficial claim to be the true supporter of Democracy. But it is obvious that every one has not the same political and economic Utopia. Therefore if ten absolutely different people with ten absolutely different ideals can all say that they want democracy, and that their policies are democratic, it is plain that democracy must be a term so elastic as to be almost useless. It really does not help us much to talk of " making the world safe for democracy," when what A calls democracy, B calls plutocracy, and what C calls democracy, D calls anarchy, Bolshevism, and the end of all things. During the war, vaguely called a war for democracy, power in Great Britain passed more than ever into the hands of the small governing class, and its bureaucratic hangers-on. A witty man remarked during that period that Mr. Lloyd-George called Britain a free country because it was a place where he was free to do what he liked. Then a general election confirmed the clique in power and their supporters called the new Government " democratic " because it had won its election and their opponents called it " undemocratic " because of the peculiar methods of the Coalition Whips; they also could call the new Parliament undemocratic because the minority parties had fewer seats than a fair method of representation would have given them.

One man proves to you that Proportional Representation is the only "democratic" way of conducting an election, while another shows it to be utterly undemocratic because it plays into the hands of the party machine. And all the while there is the egregious optimist who is going to solve every problem and every dispute by "democracy." In fact, the puzzled seeker after truth will probably come to the conclusion that "democratic" and "undemocratic," mean to most people who use the words, nothing more than desirable and undesirable.

Yet what a sorry state of affairs! Here is a supreme idea for which men are willing to be imprisoned and tortured, to kill and to be killed; and no two people have the same view as to its meaning. Consider the waste of paper and breath and effort, of temper and money and life involved by such a misunderstanding. Here is a noble word that once was like a sharp and gleaming knife to eradicate the cancers of society —the very name of it is beautiful, said a Greek apologist—and now it is so hacked and blunted by misuse that it is no longer of any value for the surgery of state-craft; like an outworn razor, it is thrown away, and he who uses it will only do himself damage. The process, however, is only natural. Lay the delicate weapon of the mind before the millions of all classes who have been taught to read but not to think, and they will

very soon treat it as they would a hammer or a pick-axe. They may be masters of the copy-book, but they are slaves of the catch-word. The great words of history and of philosophy become the "mumbo-jumbo" of demented journalism. Any thing means every thing. Democracy, which was to be a panacea, becomes a pantechnicon.

This state of affairs demands a remedy, and the remedy lies with the individuals that go to make up the community. It is for them to resolve that they will not use terms which they cannot define. As an encouragement, however trivial, to that resolve this book is written. It is based upon a profound conviction that the only way to make the world safe for democracy is to start by defining it.

Many and different abstract ideas have been put forward by various thinkers as the means to the salvation of society, We have been told to put our faith in Christianity and in Humanism, in Authority and in Democracy, in Non-Resistance and in Big Battalions, in Socialism and in Industrialism, in Great Men and Votes for Women. Men have believed and struggled and failed; have built towering hopes and seen them fall to the ground; have dreamed shining dreams and seen them fade in the grey light of reality. For this there are many reasons, man's own petty jealousies and mean ambitions not least.

But there is one predominant reason. It is the very form and fashion of folly to make a goal of abstract ideas when that goal cannot be recognised in concrete terms of actual human experience. Vain to seek salvation in democracy when you have only the haziest notion as to what democracy is. Certainly force and material wealth will not save us; abstract ideas, so often despised by the practical man, alone can do that. But first we must establish full dominion over those ideas. We must go back to the old Socratic method and make ourselves efficient craftsmen of politics. To do this we must begin at the beginning, becoming the apprentices of precision and the journeymen of definition. Only thus can we become masters of our tool, which is the mind.

CHAPTER TWO

The Derivation of Democracy and the Meaning of Sovereignty

The obvious method of setting out on our task of definition is to investigate the derivation of our particular term. Democracy is a transliteration of the Greek word, *dèmocratia*, which was a combination of two other Greek words—*demos*, the people, and *kratia*, power. Democracy means then by derivation, people's power. This was contrasted by the Greek theorists with a series of other powers. There was Monarchy from *monos*, alone, and *arche*, rule, Oligarchy from *oligoi*, few, and *arche*, rule, and Aristocracy from *aristoi*, best, and *kratia*, power, the best men's power. These distinctions seem simple enough at first sight, but they carry with them considerable complications. Aristocracy, for instance, the power of the best, is vague, because best is a relative term and implies the question, "best in what?" The meaning generally attached is, "best in birth," and the word aristocracy is so used in English almost exclusively. But the Greeks who first employed the word certainly referred to a more general

excellence and there is no reason why we should not attach to it the signification of best in character and brain. Underlying the support of government by blue blood, there is often the implication that superiority in character and brain necessarily accompanies superiority in birth. It is not our purpose, however, to discuss the origin and validity of such fantastic superstitions.

Democracy then, is people's power, and a democratic state is a community in which the masses are powerful. That seems to be a perfectly plain statement, but it is capable of a double construction. For there comes to mind an old assertion that government is based ultimately on opinion and not on force. On whose opinion ? On the opinion of the governed, that is to say, of the people. But if all govermnent is based on the opinion of the people, then surely all government is democratic and to distinguish democracies from any other 'ocracies is the merest triviality and hair-splitting. Let us first examine the validity of the statement that government is based on opinion, not on force. On the whole, it will be found true in the main, but there are exceptions to it and it needs qualification. It is best to take some historical examples of so-called tyrannies and to see whether it can fairly be said that they rested on public opinion. The late Czarism of Russia was

desperately resented by a few, and it was irksome to many; but the majority of Russians were either too ignorant or too indifferent, owing to lack of education, difficulties of communication, and the all-engrossing problem of maintaining a livelihood in the hard agrarian struggle, to bother themselves with revolutionary action. Or else, while wishing to be rid of the Czarism and its bureaucratic administration, they felt that the trouble and danger of an upheaval were not worth risking for the end in view. So the tyranny continued to exist, not founded on a definite manifestation of popularity, but on an indefinite state of acquiescence. There came a breaking-point. The complete mismanagement of the war and the sacrifice of millions of peasants' lives owing to the incompetence of the militarist party proved too much for the long patience of the moujik and the hitherto loyal artisan. They passed from a dull acquiescence in Czarism to a fervid hostility. They were won over in masses by the revolutionary few, and took definite and decisive action against the old regime. The revolution used force, but the revolutionary idea was prior to the revolutionary force. It was not the violence that made the opinion, but the opinion that made the violence. Hence it may reasonably be argued that both Czarism and the Revolution were based on popular opinion and, if we are to define democracy as government by

popular opinion, then both were in that sense democratic. The same holds true of Kaiserism in Germany and Austria. The revolutions were the external signs of a change from tolerance of an autocratic system to a pronounced and active intolerance. Similarly, all the age-long tyrannies of history may be shown to have their roots in public willingness to put up with the minor inconveniences of monarchy and oligarchy as being preferable to the major dangers and privations of a revolution.

On the other hand, it is at least conceivable that a small minority of rulers with an efficiently trained and armed soldiery could hold in subjection a far larger number of poorly armed people, all of whom eagerly demanded freedom and were willing to take any risk to win it, short of facing the inevitable annihilation that a rebellion would cause. In this case it may fairly be claimed that opinion of the governed had nothing to do with their government, although one who wished to strain a point might perhaps contend that the subjects' preference of life under that rule to facing death or the severest penalties in revolt, was a proof that opinion had something to do with their condition. To that length, however, we can hardly follow the argument. Anyhow, such cases are extremely rare, as there is usually a minority party in the subject race that connives at or openly supports the

governing invaders; furthermore, the foreign domination would in all probability not find it worth while to maintain the violence and the vigilance necessitated by a population entirely and bitterly hostile.

Thus, if democracy means nothing more than government according to the opinion of the governed, all government may be called democratic, and the word democracy has come to mean so much that it really means nothing at all. This is an unsatisfactory conclusion, and we must look around to see whether there has been any error in the reasoning that led to it. Indeed, the confusion is not far to seek; it lies in the acceptance of acquiescence and will as identical things. For the tolerant opinion which allows another to govern you is one thing; the resolute determination to be self-governing is another. Nearly all governments are based on opinion; very few on an active passion for self-determination. The two extremes are complete toleration of the arbitrary and irresponsible tyranny of a ruling class and a thorough resolve on the part of all the individual citizens that the machinery of government shall be controlled strictly in accordance with the common will. Most modern democracies lie somewhere between these poles. The confusion in which we became involved is really the old confusion about the nature of Sovereignty.

Throughout the history of thought, political theorists have been concerned to discover the ultimate source of power in any community. They wanted to find the real fount of authority whence the temporary rulers drew their sway. This ultimate source of power is technically known as Sovereignty. Here, as usual, the confusion and the wrangling is about an abstract idea, and yet the philosophers went in search of it before they sufficiently defined it and agreed among themselves as to what they were seeking for. Plainly there is nothing to be gained by looking for something which you cannot recognise. Sovereign power, on reflection, must mean at least two things, if not more. In every community there is one particular person or body of persons who make and unmake law. It is perfectly easy to discover who are these persons or bodies in the various countries of the world. The legal sovereign, to be technical, is determinate. In Great Britain whatever is ordained by the King and the two Houses of Parliament is law and must be obeyed on pain of punishment. Theoretically this sovereign body controls the executive and the judiciary powers, that is to say, the people who administer the laws. It does not, of course, make morality, because the law may be immoral; but once elected, the House of Commons, if supported by the King and the House of Lords, can do no legal wrong; it can,

of course, do bad in the eyes of morality but not wrong in the eyes of the law. It can uproot the whole British Constitution, and erect a new one in its place; it can enfranchise and disfranchise. Whatever Parliament chooses to do, the electors have no legal rights against it, and no legal duty but to obey. They have only the right to refuse to re-elect members or governments who have disobeyed their electoral mandate, and apparently Parliament has the right to continue its life indefinitely. If a Parliament were to do this in the face of a popular demand for a new election, it might become moral for the electors to act illegally and revolt against Parliament, but nothing could make such conduct legal. Parliament, however immoral, would have the law on its side, for Parliament has the legal sovereignity. In countries like the United States, where there is a written Constitution apart from the law-making of Congress, the situation is more complex, but it is not necessary to go into these details and complications at present; it is enough to demonstrate the point that in every state there is a person or a body of persons who hold the sources of legal power and that this person or body can be found and definitely noted. This determinate person or body we shall refer to in future as the Actual Legal Sovereign.

But a moment's reflection will show that the

Actual Legal Sovereign is not the real source of all power. Parliament, whatever its legal rights, does not act in a totally irresponsible way; it does acknowledge some master. The real source of power is, as we saw, the opinion of the governed. Behind the Actual Legal Soverign in any community lies an Ultimate General Sovereign. This supreme force is nothing more or less than public opinion. This public opinion may be tolerant of different forms of Actual Legal Sovereignity. It may tolerate an individual tyrant or an oligarchy of birth or a plutocracy in the shape of wealthy new-comers, or a mixture of these elements. Or it may decide that the public can best manage things for itself. It may, in fact, decide to merge as far as possible the two sovereignties. Thus the Actual Legal Sovereign will become dependent upon the Ultimate General Sovereign in detail as well as in theory. It may really be said to be identified with it.

This is the criterion of democracy. If democracy means government according to the opinion of the governed, then nearly all government is democratic and the word in question becomes meaningless. But the word acquires a very real and important meaning when the governed pass from acquiescence to volition, and determine to do for themselves what they have hitherto allowed others to do for them. Democracy begins as a spiritual assertion and an act of will.

DERIVATION OF DEMOCRACY

In undemocratic countries the many allow the few to run the machinery of government as they please, unless they violate too grossly all popular convictions and traditions. In democratic countries popular opinion is no longer vaguely tolerant, but definitely articulate. Not only do the many know what they want, but they see to getting it for themselves by capturing and controlling the instruments of government.

Obviously, there are many intermediate stages in the path to democracy, but the perfect democracy could only be reached when the aspirations of the Ultimate General Sovereign were clearly formulated and accurately executed by the Actual Legal Sovereign. It cannot be too often emphasised in a world of incipient democracy that there is a vast gulf between government according to public opinion and government by the people. It is similar to the gulf fixed between the rich man who from sheer inertia pays servants to arrange his life for him, and the rich man who pays servants to carry out his purposes. Both in the long run are powerful, but only one is self-governing. It is this difference which gives content and meaning to that much-abused word democracy.

CHAPTER THREE

Public Opinion and the People

We have seen that the essence of democracy is the combination in one body of the Ultimate General Sovereignty and the Actual Legal Sovereignty, that is to say the transition from a public opinion that tolerates monarchy or oligarchy to a public will for common self-government. But since we have throughout laid especial emphasis on the necessity for defining all our terms we must therefore ask and endeavour to answer the question, "What constitutes public opinion?" After all, opinions do not grow spontaneously in the body politic.

In the first place, it cannot be repeated too often that man is a traditional animal. The ordinary person acts far more upon hearsay, custom, and the deeply ingrained habits of his kind, than upon the dictates of reason. The innate conservatism of people is most marked and most easily observed in their petty work-a-day affairs. Methods of cooking and of household management, for instance, are handed from generation to generation, and cannot be altered by the advice, however frequent and logical, of the

domestic reformer. Superstitions die harder than tyrannies; kings, priests, and capitalists may come and go, but the bedroom window remains tightly closed, and best clothes are worn on Sundays. Huge and inevitable disappointment awaits the teacher who imagines that man, being reasonable, has only to be told the truth to follow it, and there have been many such; the history of thought is strewn with their wrecked hopes. A very good instance of the power of tradition was shown in Great Britain during the war. Though up to 1916 this was not a conscript country, it could, unfortunately, be said that war was, or formed part of, a national tradition. The idea of serving in the navy or army for a remuneration not based on ordinary commercial rates was familiar. But owing to the capitalist system of private enterprize there was no tradition of national service in industry. Accordingly it seemed right and proper to the national conscience that one man should face wounds, privation, and death for a shilling a day, while the shipowner and munition maker should make every penny or pound he could by exploiting the national necessity. Custom had taught these people that shortages meant high prices and big profits, and if the shortages were caused by a war in which their brothers were dying for a shilling a day, that was no concern of theirs. Commercial tradition

said "exploit," and they exploited. It was just as much cricket to them as for a bowler to make use of a wet wicket. It did not occur to the custom-bound community that the carrying and selling of food was just as much a national service as fighting. Therefore the amazing paradox of stinting the men in the trenches and giving free play to the commercialism of the war worker, whether employer or employed, was continually enacted for the simple reason that national tradition regarded industry as a game of grab. The price of labour was regulated by scarcity-value, and labourers could hardly be expected not to take advantage of such a scarcity. Capital took whatever profits it could skim off and could hardly be expected to forego creaming such plentiful milk. Again, men who would go far to avoid robbing a neighbour do not hesitate to cheat the State, which is their neighbour, in the matter of taxation, because tradition does not speak out strongly on this subject. Man lives by custom and the roots of public opinion are deeply set in a thick soil of illogical beliefs and practices, whose origin it would need an encyclopædia to determine.

But customs, though hardy and long-lived, do alter with the lapse of time. The strong, cold wind of reason prevails at last and they wither where they stood. It used to be a customary and a blameless practise to butcher

anyone who did not conform to your own religious beliefs. Centuries elapsed before this ugly weed of custom was rooted up, but reason did win at last. Some day perhaps, reason will destroy the equally ugly habit of butchering people who happen to belong to a different nationality. This weed of war has tremendous tenacity and to lay it low will be reason's greatest triumph. This cleansing power of reason is brought to bear on the mass of tradition by scattered individuals who always suffer heavily for their temerity. The custom-bound majority resist innovation for a long time and then, collapsing suddenly, take the new state of affairs for granted. The first pioneers of Woman Suffrage were regarded much as cannibals or criminal lunatics, but after many years of persecution and contempt their views became respectable and their measure passed suddenly into law with scarcely any comment or opposition. Probably the majority of the old scoffers hardly knew that it had happened. The truth seems to be that, if any determined minority bring forward a proposition that is not inherently ridiculous or utterly against the grain of human nature, and are prepared to go persistently on in the face of contumely and rebuff, they can, as it were, weave the new strand of thought into the texture of national tradition. Thus does private opinion work itself by slow degrees into the stuff of public opinion.

Before the days of cheap printing and almost universal reading news and opinions were grafted on to public information and tradition by wandering teachers and the drift of hearsay. A new idea or fact came to some man's ears and he repeated it to his friends, so that the matter was passed on and discussed over the cups or glasses in coffee-house or tavern. But with the introduction of a more general education and a wide demand for cheap literature new factors were set at work. It became obvious that the men who moulded the scheme of common education would be able to mould public opinion, and still more would the purveyors of newspapers be able to thrust their opinions on those who could not or would not think for themselves. Public opinion is tending therefore to become less traditional, though tradition is still immensely strong, and to become more artificial. The old situation, where a few reformers fought the big battalions of conservatism by word of mouth and by their own example, is now yielding to one where a few rich men can present to millions of readers at the same moment their own faked news with their own significant silences and their own interested interpretation of that news. Public opinion can thus be altered and manufactured more easily by the printed word. There still seem to be many men and women in this country who believe that if a thing is in print it must

necessarily be true. Any psychologist who has studied the art of advertisement and realised its tremendous hypnotic power must admit the drastic effect of continual repetition. If the papers make the same statement day after day those who doubted it strongly at first will eventually begin to believe in it despite their own reasoning powers. This is not the place to discuss the evils inherent in this situation. The present question is solely one of fact We are concerned with the raw material of public opinion it is not our business to criticize it.

Public opinion then is largely inherited in the shape of national tradition; but in an ever-growing measure it is subject to environment in the shape of external forces such as education and agitation. It is not one belief but a vague mass of fears, desires, beliefs, and moral judgments; in times of emotional stress this loose mass solidifies and there is a general intensification. Fears become panics, desires become passions, vague beliefs become strict creeds, and moral judgments become harsh and narrow condemnations. Public action takes place when public opinion on the subject in question takes form and becomes articulate. Democracy emerges when public opinion, derived from whatever source and stiffened by whatever forces, ceases to be tolerant of external rule and demands expression in self-government. The seeds sown

by prophets long since dead come to fruition at last and public opinion becomes public determination. There is a demand for a change of Legal Sovereignty and for the introduction of government by the people as well as of the people.

"Government of the people, by the people, for the people." That is a popular catchword of democracy. But, according to our principle, we cannot leave any such phrase unquestioned. We must demand a definition. It may seem to be a stupid question to ask "Who are the people? but it is not as stupid as it seems when we realise that complete adult suffrage is still to be sought in a "world made safe for democracy." To talk of government by the people may mean all or nothing until we have said what we mean by "the people." Here again definition is the very essence of the matter.

Democracy, as we saw, meant "people's power" in the Greek. Are we then to believe that the Greek democrats divided power equally among all the people? The way to divide power is to give individual rights, legal and political. Political rights would consist mainly of attendance at a Council or Parliament or the privilege of electing representatives to attend on one's behalf. This gives each person a share in the making of the laws which govern his life. This brings about the distribution of legal sovereignty among the citizens. The crucial point thus becomes the

possession of citizenship and civic rights. But the Athenians themselves, the founders of democratic theory and for ever boasting of their own great essay in democratic practice, had only, at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, 30,000 enfranchised citizens in a population of 230,000. Citizenship was a charmed circle, from which aliens, slaves, and all women were excluded. Therefore, to say that in "democratic" Athens there was government by the people is a complete mis-statement, unless we give a very limited interpretation to the word people. There was only government by a fragment of the whole people, and this was called democracy because a franchise so comparatively wide seemed remarkable in a world of oligarchies and tyrannies. When we come to British history and modern times we find that after the great Reform Bill of 1832, which the reactionaries regarded as the end of all things and the democrats as the key to a new Jerusalem, only a small percentage of the adult population was enfranchised. Even at the General Election of 1918, after the biggest Reform Bill of all, the people and the electorate were very different entities. The creators of the French Revolution, one of the greatest outbursts of democratic effort in all time, did not bother to enfranchise the female half of the nation. They were swift to maintain that the voice of the people was the voice of God but

they took upon themselves to limit participation in that divine utterance. Perhaps the reason why they laid so much emphasis on fraternity was because they were determined to have no sisters in the movement.

Democratic theory, like all innovations, has to fight its way against a vast barrier of conservative tradition. But the reactionaries cannot rely on custom alone, strong though that fortress is. They, too, bring reason as an ally and raise arguments against that wholesale division of power which is the root principle of democracy. Democracy, to be logical, should demand an equal division of power and distribution of rights. But it is this point which the opponents of democracy contest. Their contention is, though it is put in rather less plain language, that some individuals are better than "people," while others are not fit to be "people" at all. For instance, some constitutions have been built on a property qualification for citizenship and award the individuals one or more votes, *i.e.*, power-units according to their wealth. The old Prussian franchise was so manipulated in the interests of the rich, and the British plural voting, not yet extinct, is a manifestation of the same principle. The real implication of such constitutional forms is that one rich man is really more of a "person" than one poor man, and therefore deserves to have a bigger share of the power or rights divided

among the people. In the same way to keep large bodies or classes of people disfranchised is to imply that they are not "people" at all. Up till 1918 women in this country, more than half the adult population, were classed with criminals and lunatics as not being persons when it came to the distribution of power in political life. Now they become political persons at the age of thirty. Obviously some age limit must be fixed for the commencement of citizenship; no one but a most fanatical believer in Natural Rights would advocate the enfranchisement of babies in arms or even of school children. Some people mature more quickly than others, but a general rule must be fixed and the rational plan would be to give civic rights when we demand civic duties and responsibilities. Certainly to say, as we now do, that a man becomes one of the people at twenty-one and a woman at thirty is mere perversity. This folly was produced of course by a half hearted compromise.

Efforts then are made to limit membership of the people on the grounds of wealth, age, and sex. Underlying much of the opposition to Woman Suffrage was the idea that physical strength should really be a determining factor when we are considering the apportionment of political power. Society, some said, is based on force and as women cannot fight neither shall they vote. This argument is pitifully futile.

Accept it and to be logical you must disfranchise all men over military age and all men unfit for service. In the second place a defensive force does not consist of infantry but of many arms, and it depends entirely on the labours of those at home. Obviously the W.A.A.C.'s and the munition workers were just as much instruments of force as the soldiers of the line. But such refutations of the argument are less to the point than giving it the lie direct. Society, as we have already seen, is not based on force but on opinion. Government is not maintained in the long run by violence but by common interest. For every individual who refrains from stealing simply because he is afraid of the policeman, there are thirty who refrain because they realise that promiscuous thieving would upset the whole structure of society. We keep to the left hand side in driving, not through fear of penalty, but through seeing the sense of common organising. Force may at times be necessary to hold society together though some people deny even this; that is not the same as saying that it is the base of society. The very word denies it; the true cement of our fellowship is confidence. If we occasionally call in the doctor, that does not constitute him the cause and the foundation of our existence.

It is really an astonishing proof of confusion of thought that anyone who professes and calls himself a democrat should set to work to make

arbitrary assumptions as to who the people are. We are not endeavouring to show that democracy is the best form of government, nor are we inquiring what is the best form of government. We are simply trying to discover what the word democracy implies. If a man believes that the limitation of power is essential to the salvation of society he is entitled to his belief. And he can limit it as he chooses, by sex, by wealth, by birth or by age and strength. But he cannot fairly claim that he believes in government by the people. It is reasonable to assume that those who have put themselves outside the pale of society by criminal attacks upon it or by consistent neglect of it's decisions should for contempt of social duties be deprived of social rights; or that those whom misfortune has put outside the pale by lunacy should have no claim for rights upon those who expect no responsibilities from them. But it is indeed hard to find a reason for making other distinctions as to membership of the people and for refusing a share of power to those who are poor or weak, while claiming to be democratic. The further excuse of the pseudo-democrat that it is dangerous to give power to the uneducated is well met by a peremptory demand for general and thorough education.

To sum up, our argument has now carried us to the following point. Democracy is created when public opinion, ceasing to be tolerant of the

tenure of political power (Actual Legal Sovereignty) by one man or by a few, passes to an active resolution that this power should be possessed by the people and therefore divided among the people. Accepting democracy, *i.e.*, people's power as one's ideal, there is no reason for denying to any sane, law-abiding adult membership of the people and the possession of rights and duties. Thus, democracy, to be genuine, must be founded on the doctrine of equality.

CHAPTER FOUR

Equality, Equity, and Natural Rights

"The doctrine of human equality." Another abstract phrase! Here again there is call for definition, if our method is to be maintained and the necessary precision for the subject to be kept up. When a theorist proclaims to the world that all men are equal, what precisely does he mean? If he means by his war-cry that all men and women are equal and alike in character and capacity, then surely he is talking arrant nonsense. Not even the most fanatical doctrinaire could deny, for instance, that A is cleverer than B, and that B is cleverer than C, that D is self-controlled, while E is weak and unreliable, that F is physically a giant, while G is a puny weakling, that H has a good memory but cannot reason, while J has an acute mind but cannot remember what he is told. It takes all sorts to make a world and there is no use blinding our eyes to the presence of all sorts.

No sane man then could assert that all men are alike and mean that all men are equal. But sane men do assert the equality of man. When they do so they assert not equality of capacity

but equality of rights. They argue that when, according to the rule of democracy, power is taken from the few and divided among the many, it must be divided on the principle of equality. Each man or woman, they say, should have one voice and no one should have two. In the words of Jeremy Bentham, "Each to count for one, and no one for more than one." Why should this be so?

To that question two absolutely divergent answers have been given. On the one side is the doctrine of Natural Rights, with which is historically connected the French Revolution. The basis of this doctrine is the claim that every human being has by virtue of his humanity an absolute and inalienable right to certain things, among which would be freedom and equal treatment. The theory of Natural Rights is what is termed in the jargon of philosophy an "a priori" theory. That is to say it is based on fundamental assumptions which confessedly cannot be proved or referred for proof to the criterion of experience. These assumptions can be accepted or rejected, but those who believe in them are willing to accept them as they stand. Every problem of philosophy comes in the end to an a priori statement or judgment. A point is reached where something of vital importance has to be accepted without proof; or of course it can be rejected and then the structure of argument built on it

falls to the ground. The mathematician can give no reason why two and two should make four. He accepts that principle and works on it. But if somebody could prove conclusively that two and two made five, the whole mathematical edifice, as at present constituted, would fall to the ground, and a new and different one would have to be constructed. So too in ethics, a study akin to politics, a direct or a priori judgment, incapable of proof, has somewhere to be made. Why should goodness, granted that we have an idea of what it is, be pursued? We feel that it should, we say that it should, but we cannot prove that it should. We may make happiness the end of life, but why is it the end? Because we desire it. But why should our desires point out the end of life? They may be leading us astray. We have always to make somewhere in our philosophy a judgment that we cannot prove. But the question which divides philosophers is whether we should limit our a priori judgments as narrowly as possible or whether we may indulge ourselves and play with them freely.

To put it frankly the doctrine of Natural Rights makes hay with a priori judgments, and tosses statements without proof as freely as a harvester tosses his bundles. It almost gives us a picture of each baby being born with an invisible parcel of rights mysteriously attached to him. The baby has, because he is human, a right to

this and a right to that. He has of course a right to equality among other things. At first this sounds specious enough, but consider the implications. How can a baby have a right to freedom, when it certainly cannot look after itself? Freedom, after all, is a vague term, and carries with it the question, "Freedom to do what?" If a man has by virtue of his humanity the right to vote, has he the right to kill or to get drunk? "No, certainly not," comes the answer, "because he is interfering with the rights of others." But we can never settle where that interference begins except by some general and external principle, such as that of utility. He should not get drunk because it makes his wife miserable. If we continue to argue solely on the ground of rights we reach confusion at once. The man has a right to get drunk; the wife has a right to be happy; and the two things cannot coincide. One man has a right to kill; the other has a right to live. There must be some principle of adjustment. The only sword to cut the Gordian knots tied by a doctrine of Natural Rights is the doctrine of general utility, or the greatest happiness of the greatest number. But if this sword is to be used, it might as well be used far earlier.

The doctrine of Natural Rights has about it a philosophical crudity that horrified both the conservative Whigs like Burke and the radical

Utilitarians like Bentham. But like many philosophical crudities it contained a tremendous truth; the truth of the doctrine of equality.

The argument, or rather the statement, that man is born with a large number of rights attached to him eternally and inalienably can easily be reduced to an absurdity. But that does not prove that he has no rights at all. We must make an a priori judgment somewhere, and here is the spot. Man surely is born with one supreme, irreducible right, the right to have rights or in other words, the right to fair treatment and to equality of consideration. The various practical rights that should belong to men, women and children, must be settled in the light of general utility or common happiness. Whether a man should be allowed by society to get drunk, or a woman to drug herself with the eternal teapot, whether children should be compulsorily educated or be allowed the freedom of entering industry when their parents wish to exploit them, whether a man should be forced to do in the interests of the community what he personally believes to be wrong; all these and similar questions must be answered, but they certainly cannot be settled by the admission of a large number of conflicting and inalienable rights. There must be accommodation, as the Utilitarians insisted, and this accommodation can be best carried out on the principle of creating the maximum of common

happiness. But at the root of all such settlements must be an acknowledgment of the one great and vital right—the right to have rights. If the believers in Natural Rights had limited their creed to this one claim they would have been both practically and philosophically on firm soil. As it was they carried their doctrine to extreme lengths; but just because it was founded on essential truth it had a tremendous influence upon the world. The doctrine of Natural Rights, though it is crude philosophy, has often turned out to be good politics. For in the hands of it's believers it has been a sturdy bludgeon against all kings, priests, and plutocrats who would shackle and confine the free activities of the human spirit, and restrict the goodness of life in their own particular interests.

The Utilitarians, though bitterly opposed to a priori methods of thought, worked in many ways for ends identical with those of the Natural Right doctrinaires. Their efforts as reformers were unbounded, and, although they attached themselves to an economic theory of *laissez-faire*, which ultimately proved to be destructive of the "greatest happiness" at which they aimed, they did fine work during the first half of last century in securing the reform, long overdue, of the antiquated and barbarous Legal and Penal System. The fact that Carlyle scoffed at Benthamism as "gross" is but the measure of the man's ignorant

vanity. The Utilitarians attacked the institution of slavery, for instance, on practical, not on a priori grounds. They attacked it because it was detrimental to the common good and because it destroyed the happiness of men, while the a priorists attacked it on the ground of Natural Right. While one side showed it was stupid, the other showed it was wrong. From this it can be easily seen how men may come to similar and beneficial results by very different roads.

This brings us back to the question of equality. Against the doctrinaire statement that men are born equal and cannot be made unequal, the Utilitarians replied that men are born unequal and very easily kept unequal; that equality is not born but made, and that the reason for making it is that it promotes happiness. If it ceases to promote it, then it is time to destroy it, rights or no rights. Democracy to the Utilitarian is the true method of politics, not because of anything sacred inherent in it, but because it is the political system which experience has showed to be the best creator of happiness. The voice of the people is not the voice of God, infallible and irresistible, but the surest guide to the goal of common welfare. Equality, again, to them, has nothing sacred or mystic about it, but it is the true method of democracy because it is the only method that works. Statemanship is concerned with vast numbers of people; it has neither the

time nor the knowledge to start drawing fine distinctions. However reasonable it may seem at first sight to try and sort the sheep from the goats, to realise that A is an able and a conscientious citizen, while B is a stupid and a lazy self-seeker, and to reward A with two votes or power-units and B with none, humanity is not so easily susceptible of classification. The statesman is faced with C and D and E, all different types, neither very good nor very bad. Not only are comparisons of this kind odious, they are impossible. No man, not even the mightiest of Whitehall panjandrums and most God-gifted of bureaucrats, is omniscient, and therefore no man or body of men can fairly arrange how democratic power should be split up, save on some rough and ready rule. The simplest rule is that of equality. It soon becomes obvious that the only feasible method for the statesman is to treat all men alike, not because they are really alike, but because distinctions, invidious among individuals, become impossible among a million. The doctrine of human equality, even in the severely Utilitarian form here given to it, may seem to be a glaring piece of folly, but taking all in all it is the only way of getting on with practical politics. Philosophically it is a fiction, but it is a fiction that works.

We must be careful here to distinguish between equality and equity. The law treats men

theoretically as equals, but this leads to unfairness in individual cases, as circumstances alter those cases. When equality thus fails to provide justice, equity is called in to physic it. Equitable treatment is based on equality of consideration or equality of opportunity. This may sound hard and involved, but an instance will make it plain. Suppose a father is making his will, and he has two sons to consider. He has saved his money with difficulty, and naturally wishes to put it to the best use. The elder son has shown himself to be a hopeless profligate and may be relied upon to squander any money that comes his way at the earliest opportunity and in the least productive manner. The younger son is ambitious and careful in a reasonable degree. He would spend his money on further education and on travel; he is eager to make a good start in life. Here equal treatment would give fifty per cent. of the money to each son; equitable treatment would surely give a greater share, if not all, to the younger. It would be equal treatment to divide a cake among a family so that each had a piece of the same size. But what would satisfy the appetite of the eldest son would probably make the baby sick. Equity, which is simply equality tempered with justice, might solve the problem more helpfully. The baby might, and probably would, complain that he was being cheated; he has not had

equality, but he has had equality of consideration.

But equity, however desirable it may be, cannot be applied to politics on a large scale. A father making his will can fairly draw distinctions because he knows all the relevant facts. But a statesman cannot possibly know anything in detail about the million or more with whom he has to deal; they are just so many units to him. He can make a few rough divisions into classes, but even these are usually unsatisfactory; he cannot attempt to judge between the myriad individuals. He can allot Old Age Pensions to all below a certain degree of wealth and over a certain age. But he cannot constitute himself a moral judge and begin to except those whose poverty is due to their own thriftlessness and folly and therefore have no just claim on their fellows. The fact is that in dealing with these large numbers he cannot possibly tell where misfortune ends and where misconduct begins. In default of equity we must have equality. Efforts are made to introduce equity into political measures, but only by the division into classes, not by giving separate treatment to separate individuals. On grounds of equity, people with incomes under £120 are not called upon to pay any income-tax, and people with incomes up to £700 obtain certain remissions. But no really accurate distinctions are made as between A

who supports an invalid mother and two invalid sisters, and B who has only himself to keep on the same amount of money. It is always desirable to advance equity, if it can be done efficiently. But the trouble is that it cannot. Classification might be carried further, and a more accurate grading and apportionment of the income-tax is eminently desirable and probably feasible. The Tribunals were supposed to introduce equity into the equality of conscription, but they were not a great success. The fault lay not in themselves, but in the enormity of their task. They were endeavouring to introduce equity where it is notoriously impossible to do so with any accuracy; they were endeavouring to make fair individual judgments where they could do no more than classify.

In any community the law takes up a situation in the midst. It is always behind the most advanced opinion and in advance of the most reactionary. Because it cannot distinguish between one man and another it is bound to be unfair. But if it tried to do so the result would be worse. In aristocratic and plutocratic communities the dice are often loaded against the poor, whose ignorance of technicalities renders them unable to defend themselves. But even if the law were administered with complete absence of bias, it would always be unfair, because it must make rough divisions which do not represent

the intricacies of human nature. Men are not either innocent or guilty, honest or thieves. The law cannot concern itself with motives as much as with results, although from the strictly ethical point of view the would-be murderer who could not make his pistol go off is distinctly worse than the man-slaughterer whose pistol went off by mistake. The law cannot allow ignorance of the law to be an excuse, though from the ethical point of view it is often a very fair one. All classification is busy telling lies, while it is busy telling truths; and the law is a great classifier. The law, in fact, representing the principle of equality, makes blunders; for men are not equal or alike. But no one has yet shown any better way of dealing with large numbers than to deem them equal. And so democracy must accept equality, not because it is a sacred principle, but because there is no sacred principle. In dealing with a nation, statesmen must aim at equity as far as possible; but as a rule they must fall back upon equality; because they will find out in time that it is the only true equity.

It would be as well to sum up this argument as far as it has gone, even at the obvious risk of being tedious. But there is no greater fault in a book than vagueness and an inconsequent jumping to and fro. At the close of the last chapter we held that democracy reigns when public

opinion, ceasing to be tolerant of the usurpation of political power (Actual Legal Sovereignity) by one man or by few, insists on the possession of this power by the people and therefore on its division among the people. There is no reason for limiting membership of 'the people,' though many such limitations have been made, and democracy to be genuine must be founded on the doctrine of equality. Let us now add to this: "By equality we do not mean that everybody is alike or that every one is born into the world with a certain number of natural, inalienable rights; but simply that in the division of power and of happiness at which democracy aims, 'each must count for one, and no one for more than one,' because this is the only working method. Equity is useful to remedy defects in the law or in the economic structure of society, but must be carefully watched because it may be the tool of interested parties. On the whole it will be found that in the distribution of power the principle of equality is essential because no other method can possibly deal with large masses of people."

CHAPTER FIVE

Representative Government

Having accepted the principle of equality as the basis of a democratic division of power, we are by no means out of the wood. Rather are we but entering its most tangled undergrowth. Where "the people" in question happen to be comparatively few, then direct legislation can obviously be effected by a mass meeting of the people; this was done in the case of the Athenian democracy, where the supreme body was the meeting of the citizens, at which any possessor of full civic rights could speak and vote. And the same solution of the problem is possible nowadays when democracy is the method of government chosen by a small group of people associated for any purpose; the supreme body of such a group may be the general meeting attended by all members, each possessing one voice and one vote. Its decisions are recorded by a count, and in such a case it may fairly be claimed that power is divided equally among all.

But, even in so simple a form of government, the principle of election, carrying with it an inevitable delegation of power, must be intro-

duced. For an assembly of people, however keen and however intelligent, cannot do more than assent to, or dissent from, a series of proposals put before it. When some policy has been finally accepted, the assembly itself cannot be the agent or executor of that policy. It must create for itself an executive official or body of officials. These agents, if the practice is to conform with democratic theory, should be elected by the individual members of the assembly, and should naturally be responsible to the assembly for their subsequent conduct and their success or failure in giving effect to the policy which has been decided upon. These officials are, in a true sense, representatives of the people, and representation is thus seen to be an inevitable element of even the simplest forms of democracy.

But in all the great communities of modern times the number of citizens, even allowing for those limitations of the franchise which we saw to be so frequent and so inconsistent with democratic theory, are far too great and the territories inhabited are far too large to permit of the possibility of legislation by mass meeting. Furthermore, if the legislature were to meet frequently—as indeed it must do in a large, busy, and highly-organised community—the citizens would not be able to attend without neglecting their daily occupation. (At Athens this difficulty was remedied by the existence

and the use of a large body of slaves.) For many reasons, therefore, election has to be introduced, not only into the creation of executive bodies, but also into the creation of legislative assemblies. To this practice we are all so hardened that it may seem the most natural thing in the world. We are well used to the division of countries into "constituencies," each returning its own member or members to Senate or Parliament. This is, of course, an obvious and simple device for escaping from an obvious difficulty. Yet here, again, we must beware of over-simplification. Men are apt to use the words "representative government" as if the phrase were some magic elixir of democratic political life. But representative government, common enough in spurious forms, is, in its purity, a rare specimen for the treasure hunter. It is a goal not easily won and the path thereto abounds in pitfalls.

There are three main problems which face citizens who, not content with the mouthing of fine phrases, set out to make the equal division of people's power through representation a definite reality in political life. On the one hand, that queer farrago of conflicting traditions, instincts, superstitions, and desires, which constitutes public opinion, is not easily rendered articulate. Thus, when men attempt to build up a legislative body which may be an accurate echoing-board for the voice of the people, they

are faced with a task of immense complexity. What if the people have no voice, but only a muddled murmur? Efforts to articulate that murmur may lead to the tyranny of mechanised politics and the triumph of a self-seeking political boss.

In the second place, provided the people can make a voice distinctly heard, it is imperative to devise machinery for letting it ring out clear and true. Our modern British Parliaments, without Second Ballot or Proportional Representation, may be the servants of the people, but they do not express their master's voice. In translating the theory of representative government into practice there are many slips. And, in the third place, there is the problem, not merely of getting a fair result by election, but of keeping a curb upon the elected. Executive officials, indeed all elected persons, are notoriously troublesome people. They may owe their position primarily to the votes of their masters, but their lofty posts carry such tremendous power with them that they may swiftly and easily forget the source of that power. Few lines of Shakespeare are more often quoted than his immortal portrait of the assuming official:

> Dressed in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence-like an angry ape—
> Plays such fantastic tricks upon high heaven,
> As makes the angels weep.

"The never-ending audacity of elected persons" at which Walt Whitman protested, is just as formidable a menace to the cause of people's power as the audacity of an unelected and irresponsible tyranny. Indeed, of the two, the former, being more subtle and having on its side the technicalities of law, is far the more difficult to overcome. England knew how to deal with Charles the First. It is likely to have a far thornier task in dethroning the "Panjandrums" of Whitehall.

Let us first deal with the question of obtaining an accurate mirror of public opinion in the legislative system. Plainly this is essential to democracy as we have defined it; equally plainly it is scarcely ever achieved. Grant the existence of a free and complete adult suffrage for the expression of public opinion; grant, that is to say, an equality in the primary division of power; yet that is only the beginning. Nations or political units are then divided up into constituencies and each constituency has one or more shares of the legislature allotted to it; its inhabitants proceed at settled intervals to elect a member or members. In that apparently simple process considerable complications arise. Let us suppose the constituency has only one allotted seat, and three or more candidates compete for it; A polls 5,000, B 4,000, and C 3,000; then, according to the prevailing law of

Great Britain, A is returned as victorious member, but he represents a minority of his constitutents. Such happenings will naturally re-act upon the total composition of the legislature. It is, of course, possible for every single seat in the legislature to be held by a minority-vote member. What then becomes of representative government ?

Again, we must bear in mind that a narrow victory counts as much as an easy one; it wins the prize and the prize, whether it is earned by one vote or five thousand, is a seat and a vote in the legislature. Consequently, if one particular party were to win a great many seats by small majorities or split votes, while the other won comparatively few, but always with large majorities, the very reverse of true representation would result. A majority of voters could have a minority of members and a government could be legally formed and set in power in direct opposition to the wishes of the people. This is no idle fancy of a theorist; it did actually happen in Great Britain in 1886, when the Home Rulers won 283 seats with 2,103,954 votes, while the Unionists had 387 seats with 2,049,137 votes. In 1874, the Conservatives had 356 seats with 1,222,000 votes, and the Liberals and Radicals had 296 seats with 1,486,000 votes.

Again, most people would be willing to admit that the General Election of 1918 produced

most unfair results, for the Coalition polling 58 per cent. of the votes won 80 per cent. of the seats. This is not government by representation; it is government by sheer fluke.

And so far, we have been taking for granted that all constituencies carry equal numbers of voters, which is, of course, only roughly true after one of our periodical redistributions. In the elections of 1910, there were constituencies with electorates varying from three to forty thousand in number. Truly, our optimistic democrats have a mighty faith in the goddess, Fortune! Elections carried on under such conditions are comparable only to the backing of horses one has never seen with a book-maker one has never met, the merest rattling of politieal dice. We talk of public opinion, but public opinion, even when most rudely articulated, contains a majority and a minority view. Under our present system of conducting elections, minorities are in a hopeless position. Suppose that in all the seven hundred constituencies of the country there was an average bulk of one thousand voters who stood strongly and unswervingly for one particular policy. Perhaps they would not win a single seat and the ensuing Parliament would not offer them the scantiest representation. But there would still be seven hundred thousand of them in the country, voiceless as far as legislative action was concerned.

This would not only be grossly unfair to the voters themselves, but a grave loss to the country, in as far as the formulation and expression of new ideas are essential spurs to progress. Even the best democrats will admit that minorities are often the salt of the earth.

Now, these evils can be at least remedied, if not permanently removed. Practical proposals have been made for the Second Ballot, the Alternative Vote, and Proportional Representation. It is not our business to discuss their relative advantages in a book concerned simply with the meaning of democracy. These solutions of an immense problem have their own particular literature, their own ardent advocates, and their own bitter critics. To launch out into such perilous seas is a task vitally necessary for the practical politician and every citizen must be prepared to do so at one time or another. For the present, it is sufficient to demonstrate that before we can expect to make the division of power among the people a reality by representative government, we have to consider all these intricacies of political machinery, to face a number of sometimes contradictory facts, and to come to a decision. Phrases certainly are no use.

The complexities so far mentioned, are all soluble. It remains for our political thinkers and our statesmen in the legislature to evolve a scheme of representation which should be fair

and just. But there are other difficulties which are in their very nature incapable of a perfect solution. For instance, no man of eclectic views, no man whose sympathies do not run parallel with the straight rulings of party, can be adequately represented. Yet he is probably a citizen of value to the state, for there are no greater political virtues than critical power and independence of judgment. It is possible for a man to support particular measures in the programme of all parties, but he must vote for an out-an-out supporter of one party. Perhaps some independent member of the assembly, a person who continues to grow sadly more rare, may be his real representative, but that is entirely a matter of chance. In this respect, the mirror of public opinion can never be, even under the most favourable circumstances, strictly accurate. Inevitably we are dealing with rough likenesses, not photographs; that is the constant limitation of political life, as we saw in our discussion of equality and equity. Consequently it is mere waste of time to trouble over much about a detailed accuracy; the more pressing task is to prevent the appearance of complete distortions.

The Party System is in this country the object of much bitter criticism. Such criticism is not unnatural considering our present discontents; but it is really the accretions to that system due to the plutocratic nature of our

society and the degradation of political life by business interests, rather than the system itself which have caused the trouble and the consequent resentment. Yet the Party System has one great justification. The myriad streams of social and political ideas do naturally run into two or three main channels. Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism do represent different and coherent groups of ideals, and those who accept one group do frequently and honestly accept it without reserve. The Party System would never have attained such a tremendous hold on the country if it had not been consonant with human nature. As the sentry sings in "Iolanthe":

> Every little boy or gal,
> That's born into this world alive,
> Is either a little Liberal
> Or else a little Conservative.

Add "Socialist" to bring the ditty up to date, and there is certainly truth in it. And if this is true, if the rough mass of public opinion does really show these fairly definite strata, then the Party System is not a mere imposition upon tolerant, foolish people, but a genuine piece of machinery for the production of representative government. Coalitions are always admittedly artificial and thoroughly unpopular. The fruit of a crisis, they wither in the normal weather of

politics. The reason is simple: they are unnatural.

But the evils of the Party System are a living parable to all men who make machines. Devising servants, they make only masters. In this case the System devours the Party. Every group must have leaders, every association its executive officials, parties included. Organisation, too, is essential, and organisation means money. In a plutocratic world such as ours the necessary funds are supplied to the two Capitalist Parties by rich men, and the rich men, having paid the piper, proceed to call the tune. They demand titles, a mere piece of empty foolery which has long ceased to take in any intelligent person; and, what is really serious, they demand policies to suit their pockets. It is worth their while to control the political party machine, because by so doing they can suppress awkward proposals and elicit sympathetic administration. It may be a highly profitable investment for a big manufacturer to have the President of the Board of Trade in his pocket. The President owes his position to his party, and his party owes its position to its funds and thus to the big manufacturer. Consequently the machine, instead of being controlled democratically from below, is controlled autocratically from above. The voter at an election does not settle what the issues are to be between which he must decide. With him

it is a case of take Liberalism or leave it. The moulding of Liberalism or of Conservatism falls, under present conditions, to the people who pay. Party-thinking is inherent in human nature, and party-thinking makes party action. But party action under plutocratic conditions destroys both thought and humanity. As new machinery is always hailed with delight as the great saver of labour, and ends by making us all toil harder than ever, so the Party System ends by destroying all the genuine and valuable elements of partisan conflict and leaves nothing but a soulless and despicable system.

Who, then, is to blame? Plutocracy, we are told, is the criminal, and we are confronted with the immutable economic law whereby economic precedes political power. Into that contention we shall have reason to inquire later. But it is also true and also relevant that the individual members of the various parties do give their support to the programmes before them. If they strenuously objected, they could make their borough and county associations take action. As we originally saw, government is a matter of opinion, and if the opinion of party-members is tolerant of party-bosses, some share of the blame for the social distemper must fall upon these members. Complaints are raised because strange lawyers from London, the very riff-raff of the political clubs, are posted to contest country

seats over the heads of local candidates; and such complaints are rightly raised. But why only complaints? If the local partisans meant business, they could send these touts and spongers packing. The Party System, like any organised system, is not necessarily undemocratic in itself, but it easily becomes a hunting-ground for placemen and wire-pullers, when the mass of party-members are lazy, uncritical, unalert, and only goaded to a momentary enthusiasm by the spur of a sudden election.

> The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us.

The pleasant vice of the man in the street, as far as politics are concerned, is sleep.

In conclusion, then, we may say that the legal division of power among the people essential to democracy demands, wherever large numbers of people are being dealt with, the procedure known as representative government. But the achievement of fair and complete representation is extraordinarily difficult. In the first place, the electoral system must be carefully devised to ensure that the winning side do not win by fortune alone, but have a definite number of votes behind them. Secondly, their majority in the assembly must harmonise with their majority in the country, and minorities must have, in the hateful words of diplomacy, "adequate guarantees." This, of

course, applies not only to nations, but to any associations of men and women which are supposed to be democratically controlled. We must realise, however, that political life deals broadly with broad issues, and that men who pick and choose their measures with a delicate eclecticism will, however justifiable their choice, find scant representation in the rough and ready working of a large assembly. Parties are inevitable, for they have their roots in human nature, but they are infinitely dangerous when mechanised, and are capable of becoming, as indeed are all machines, the merciless masters of mankind. For this, however, the responsibility lies largely with the inert multitude whose political enthusiasm lives and dies with the excitement of a General Election. How often must they be reminded that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance ?

These are the difficulties in the way of electing an assembly that may fairly represent public opinion. We have next to consider the problems that arise in the effort to keep a salutary check on the vagaries of elected persons. It is not enough to elect genuine representatives; we have to see that they continue to represent.

CHAPTER SIX

Democratic Guarantees.—1 Legislative Bodies

We have seen that "people's power" demands a very searching inquiry into the methods of representation and a most careful construction of the legislative machinery. It is not enough to cry "Democracy" and to suppose that by some magic the people's will can be transmitted into laws. But even supposing that a democracy has built up for itself a legislative body in which the grosser forms of misrepresentation are impossible, suppose that it can confidently rely on any election returning a majority to power in accordance with the people's desires, that does not prove that the majority will fulfil those desires, and carry out their particular mandate. They may be elected on one issue, and immediately neglect it; they may also go on from sins of omission to sins of commission, and pass into laws measures amenable to themselves as individuals but repulsive to the electors, measures for which they have no vestige of authority. It is one thing to choose servants; it is another thing to make them do your bidding. Nor is this a mere academic difficulty, propounded

for the sake of argument. It is a common problem in all working governments, a grave and constant difficulty in that realisation of people's power which is the essence of democracy. We have already traced the many steps of thought and action that must be taken in order to translate "democracy" from being a beautiful and inspiring word into an actual and enjoyable fact. Here, then, when the cup seems near at last to the lip, the slip is most frequent and most fatal. The danger is two-fold. In the first place, there is the question of supervising the work of legislative bodies and the keeping them in close touch with the opinions of the electorate; in the second, is the even more formidable task of keeping a firm hand on the activities of executive officials. This latter is rendered extremely arduous because the actions of an official are far less easy to trace and to control than the more public deliberation and legislation of a Parliament. In each case, however, a loss of "democratic control" is always utterly fatal to the cause of people's power.

Let us deal first with the legislative body. Obviously the whole question is confused by the vagueness, not so much of the word "representative," but of the fact for which it stands. The elector can only choose his representative on one or few issues; but if that representative is to sit in a national parliament, whose duty it is to deal with a vast multitude of issues, he cannot

possibly consult his constituents on every decision which he makes and every vote which he records. It is true, if he is returned as a member of one particular party, he may reasonably support all measures that are in harmony with the underlying ideas of his party, be it Conservative, Liberal, or Socialist. But, unfortunately, life is not so simple as all that, nor measures so readily classified. Issues are bound to arise, where party formulæ and party philosophies have nothing or little to do with the case. What, then, is the honest representative to do? He cannot keep running backwards and forwards between constituency and legislature; he cannot hold a post-card ballot of his electors on every chance division; he can, and should, do his best to keep in touch with his masters by visits and discussions. But beyond this he cannot go. He must after this use his own discretion; he must vote as seems right to him.

This is the basis of the theory of representation as opposed to the theory of delegation. It was put forward very strongly by Edmund Burke to his Bristol constituents:

> "Certainly, gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought

to have great weight with him; their opinions high respect, their business unremitted attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasure, his satisfactions, to theirs; and above all, ever, and in all cases to prefer their interest to his own. But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. Your representative owes you not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

"My worthy colleague says, his will ought to be subservient to yours. If that be all, the thing is innocent. If government were a matter of will upon any side, yours, without question, ought to be superior. But government and legislation are matters of reason and judgment and not of inclination; and what sort of reason is that in which the determination precedes the discussion, in which one set of men deliberate and another decide, and where those who form the conclusion are perhaps three hundred miles distant from those who hear the argument? . . . Authoritative instructions, mandates issued, which the member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey, to vote, and to argue for, though contrary to the clearest convictions of his judgment and conscience, these are things utterly unknown to

the laws of this land and which arise from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenor of our Constitution." *

This attitude is plainly adventurous. In the hands of a lazy or an unscrupulous man, or an obstinate representative, such power may be abused, in which case the fair realisation of people's power becomes impossible of achievement. It is for that reason that many people, who are keen democrats, support the alternative of delegation. A delegate differs from a representative in that he has his marching orders accurately laid out. He is not told to go to Liberalism and to find his own way there; he is given the paths and routes which he must take. In the case of a conference called for a special purpose, the sending of delegates is the obvious and proper course. In such cases the problem is simple and must be simply dealt with. If a large Trade Union holds a conference to decide whether or not to strike, plainly the sending of delegates with strict orders from each branch is the proper method. With the system of delegation often goes the card-vote, whereby the voting-power of each delegate is in proportion to the number of his electors. When he votes for one proposal his vote is considered as one hundred

* Speech at the conclusion of the Poll.

or one thousand votes, or whatever the number of his electors may be. Such a scheme is made necessary where the branches of Trade Unions vary greatly in strength. It holds good, for instance, at the Trade Union Conference, where both the card-vote and the block-vote are in use.

But, just as delegation has its very obvious advantages under specific circumstances, so it has its very obvious limitations. This is notably true of a national parliament. Delegation fails there, because it is impossible. Where new issues are constantly arising, it is not feasible for a constituency to give its representative anything but a vague mandate. For good or ill, it must make the best of its man and trust to his being an honourable and a reliable servant. For this reason electors should consider far more than they do the personal character and capacity of a candidate rather than his loyalty to party or his faithfulness on one big issue. It is true that "party loyalty" may often govern his decisions; but it is equally true that what every legislature called on to deal widely with wide issues requires is men of strong imagination, critical power, and fearless independence. Such qualities are killed by delegation. In a truly representative body they would have free play. Of course, from the strict standpoint of people's power, they may be dangerous. But so are all good things.

Above all, it must be emphasised again that in this question of representation, absolute accuracy is beyond achievement. We can only aim at rough results, eliminate the more apparent obstacles, and hope for the best. If one member takes an independent view, as, once elected, he has a perfect legal right to do under a representative system, he may not represent the majority in his constituency, but he may represent a minority in a great many other constituencies who would otherwise go unrepresented. Probably very few of the "pacifist" members of the British Parliament represented the views of a majority of their constituents from 1914 onwards, but they did represent a quite appreciable minority in the country which would otherwise never have been heard. And in many other cases the action of an independent member may really be "democratic" on the whole, though a system of delegation would show him to be out of touch with his particular constituency. It is true that there is a risk of representation going very much astray, but the remedy for this risk is choice of members who are honourable and disinterested as well as independent. In dealing with whole nations and with millions one can but work roughly to rough results; delegation has its obvious uses, and its obvious limitations; representation is the only method, but it demands for the winning of true people's power both

principle in the candidate and vigilance in the electorate.

Let us return now from the individual member to the general legislative body. Here, too, some guarantee must be demanded against usurpation of unauthorised power. It has usually been supposed that the easiest and fairest method is to impose a time-limit upon the life of the elected assembly. Obviously some such limit must be set, for it would be madness to elect a Parliament and then leave it to legislate for twenty or thirty years without further advice from the electorate. Some term must be arranged, but what term? It would seem, at first thought, that the shorter the term the more "democratic" would be the assembly, that is to say, the more real would be the influence of the sovereign people over its elected servants. That is why the radical agitators of English history used to demand "annual parliaments." But other things have to be considered. The world's work has got to be done, and the imposition of too many checks and guarantees, though well and truly calculated to safeguard the realities of democracy, may have, on the whole, a deleterious effect. As the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, so democracy is planned for good government, not good government for the abstract ideal of democracy. And good government should aim at the happiness (broadly interpreted) or welfare of the

community. Therefore if it is found that democratic machinery is becoming obstructive by its bulk, then it must be reduced in the common interest. A General Election, for instance, means a grave dislocation of national business. If it stops trade and prevents the rich growing richer that is no particular harm, but if it takes away the most valuable people in the community from their occupations and dislocates their activities, if it is an immense demand on the time and money of working-class individuals and organisations who cannot spare either, as the rich probably can, then General Elections may be too frequent and a sorry burden to the community. We have here to strike a mean and to work out on practical rather than doctrinaire lines the most suitable lifetime for our various assemblies.

The present arrangement for Great Britain is a five-year Parliament and three-year governing bodies for County and Municipal administration. The five-year Parliament in theory becomes a four-year Parliament in practice and, as the Premier can usually force an election at will and may be driven to do so at an early date (*e.g.* 1910) when his majority is small, the average actual life of Parliament is not as large as the theoretical. This seems, on the whole, a just compromise. A party is usually elected to power on two or three large issues, to carry which into law will certainly take two or three years, Parliamentary

procedure being what it is. If the party has a sweeping mandate for those measures, then it is is not likely to deviate far from the people's will within two or three years. It may have, so to speak, a year to play with at the end, but the menace of an approaching election is some safeguard against a really unpopular proposal. The danger lies in a victory won by an appeal on a single issue, as the carrying on of a war (1900) or the making of a peace (1918). The Conservative party took advantage of a "khaki" electoral victory to force unpopular measures on the country, but the result was annihilation. The Coalition, having obtained its peace, has only the vaguest policy of Reconstruction with which to proceed. Its future does not seem, at the time of writing, to be bright.

In the meantime bye-elections do form at least a shadowy guarantee. They indicate the trend of opinion and throw a beam of light on the Damoclean sword that hangs over ministerial necks. They are not, of course, a drastic or effective guarantee, and ministers have a legal right to take as little notice of them as they please. But they are there. And they may, with the passage of time, sap a majority which is not of gigantic proportions. Moreover, their moral influence is often quite out of proportion to the numerical alterations which they bring about. It appears then, that the aim of the true democrat

is to create machinery of representation which will keep the legislature in close touch with the popular will, while not continually hampering and interfering with the work-a-day life of the world. And, from the legislators' point of view, it is only just to give them time to do their duty without being rushed and a chance to elaborate their measures without constant interference. Thus too rigid a system of democratic checks and guarantees might, in the long run, be prejudicial to the common interest. The "tribunes" veto in ancient Rome, whereby anyone of ten tribunes might hold up any legislation, was devised to safeguard the people; but it created such havoc and was so abused that it probably did the people more harm than good. Absolute accuracy of representation, as we have seen, is beyond our achievement; if, eager to achieve it, we elaborate our machinery overmuch, our efforts will be wasted in the eternal minding of machines.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Democratic Guarantees—2 Upper Houses and Direct Action

It cannot be over-emphasised that the purpose of this book is not the discussion in detail of various measures for promoting democracy, but the outlining of paths of thought. Each measure may have its own formidable literature and its own tortuous history, and for this reason defies just treatment in an essay which attempts to be both brief and comprehensive. What we can, however, attempt is to describe the general principles that must underlie any genuine effort to realise popular power, and to map out lines along which democratic thought should run.

For that reason we cannot possibly discuss in detail the proposals for the Referendum, Initiative, and the Recall. It is sufficient to say that the democrat who is disappointed with the working of representative government must take them carefully into consideration and study their effect, for instance, in Switzerland, a state that takes its democracy seriously. We must content ourselves with pointing out that the issue at stake

is really one of principle. Do we believe that the expense, the trouble, and the possibilities of obstruction and delay inherent in an elaborate system of democratic checks outweight the plain advantages of making our representative " mirror" more accurate ? Would it not be possible to make use of these checks and to guarantee no chance of their abuse ? These are not easy questions but they are the kind of problems that must be for ever in the mind of him who believes strongly in the value of democracy.

The same holds true of Upper Houses or Second Chambers. What principle underlies the Bicameral Theory and how does it re-act upon our theory of democracy ? Second Chambers may be roughly classified in two divisions, those which are simply repetitions of the popular assemblies, devised as checks, and those which exist in Federations to represent the federal units as opposed to individual or national interests. The first class are for the most part obstructionist bodies. Often they are the preserve of class-privilege and of the plutocracy, as in Great Britain. Of the existing House of Lords it may be said that it has little power, and that it has no business to have any power at all. By the preamble of the Parliament Act, however, it is theoretically doomed and is therefore hardly worth discussing. The really important question is whether it is worth our while, from the point of view of democratic theory,

to set up a Second Chamber on electoral lines in its place. For here we are in a plain dilemma. If the Second Chamber is to be elected on a basis of democratic equality, then it should be a mere repetition of the House of Commons and is useless; if it is not to be thus constituted, it can hardly be democratic. The other possibilities are that it should be chosen on a functional or vocational plan, which would give every citizen two votes, one for the Commons as a resident in a district, and one for the Second Chamber as the member of a trade, craft, or profession. Or else, if Devolution is introduced into Great Britain, the Second Chamber could represent the constituent federal units and hold a position analogous to the Senate in Australia and the United States.

In either of these latter cases the Second Chamber would have a definite ground for existence, some positive purpose to fulfil. The Second Chamber, based on the purely negative idea of obstruction, nearly always does more harm than good. Its function being conservative in the best sense it tends to become conservative in the worst sense. It is liable to be captured by "interests" and because its constructive work is far less important than its destructive work it necessarily develops a narrow and illiberal atmosphere. What is valuable in political institutions is positive function: a Second Chamber

should represent the citizens from a second standpoint, if it is to have a permanent value. A Federal Second Chamber has a very real use in upholding local and state interests against national intervention. It may act wrongly, but at least it has a *raison d'être* The same would be true of a Functional Second Chamber, a joint assembly of professional associations, Trade Unions, etc. Many people think that vocational association is a thing so valuable both to the workers in an industry and to the community at large, that it would be a grave mistake to give it so unimportant a habitation as a Political Second Chamber. Guild Socialists, for instance, who wish to see functional representation put upon a direct level with regional representation, would never consent to see their Guild Congress put in so humble a position or vested only with the powers commonly attributed to Second Chambers. But this is not the place to discuss so complex an issue; the problem of the Upper House is, in principle, a simple one. From the point of view of democratic theory the community does not need two assemblies coming from the same electorate and exercising the same function. It may need two political assemblies, if there are two political interests involved, state interests and national interests: or, if vocational interests are not considered to be sufficiently important to justify a purely Industrial Parliament, it might be wise

to have a Vocational Second Chamber. That, however, is a strongly disputed assumption, for it asserts that the regional interests of men are far more vital than their economic and professional interests. It declares that a subsidiary post in the political sphere is the proper place for the Industrial Parliament, whereas many modern democrats think that the Industrial Parliament, representing men in their productive capacity, should be at least co-equal with the Territorial Parliament, representing men as neighbours and consumers, and that the ultimate legal sovereignty should lie in a joint committee of the two Houses. Here, then, are lines of thought, stretching far out into the unknown, which must be considered by the political theorist, who is eager to map out a scheme of genuine representative government.

Before we pass on from the question of setting checks on legislative bodies to the even more formidable task of bridling executive officials, there is an aspect of the problem, which has sprung recently into prominence and deserves investigation, not so much from the practical point of view of those who went to "get-a-move-on" as from our own standpoint as theorists of democracy. This is the movement towards Direct (Industrial) Action in political affairs. It is urged that if the workers cannot get the political measures they want from the Govern-

ment and from Parliament, they can bring those unruly servants to their knees by using the strike weapon that has often proved so effective in Industrial disputes. In a country, where we have no Referendum or Recall, what power, it is asked, has an infuriated electorate to bring the Government to heel? Must it wait for a whole five years, if the elected representatives proceed immediately to break all their election pledges? It knows that they may shuffle out of trouble on a false issue with the lapse of time; only the remorseless logic of folded arms, the insistent challenge of the strike, can bring the Government to its senses—now. And time is often the essence of the matter.

Every appeal to economic force to settle a political issue is, in a very real sense, a revolution. That is no discredit to direct action, for revolutions are not necessarily discreditable things; many of the governmental reforms and industrial liberties, which nearly all men acknowledge to be good, were won by revolutionary action. But is it essential to realise that revolution must be an occasional medicine, not an ordinary diet. The world may live by revolutions, but it can never live on them. The basis of all social life is mutual confidence and the tacit agreement to abide by rules and play the game. Direct action is a breach of the rules and it

can only be justified by a preceding breach of the rules. Even so, it were far better to avoid it, if possible. The reasons for this are obvious.

Direct action can only be used successfully by those whose economic position gives them a strangle-hold upon the community. It may take the form of a general strike or of a strike by a powerful section of the workers. Clearly the former type of direct action is more democratic. There is no justification for any group of workers in a dominant position (*e.g.*, the British Triple Industrial Alliance of Miners, Railwaymen, and Transport Workers) using that position to enforce a political object unless they are really voicing the general will as against arbitrary action by the Government of the day. But if they are so convinced, would not a general political strike by all the workers be a better method ? This would at least destroy the accusation that a section is trying to enforce its own sectional interests. But, if the general will is really active on the subject in question, it is possible, if not probable, that a big political agitation and propaganda, rendered irresistibly convincing by its universality, would succeed in moving the Government. And, if the question could be thus settled, it would certainly be the better way of achieving it : for the adoption of direct action as a regular political method is undemocratic, just because it

destroys all possibility of political equality and places particular powers in the hands of special industries. The Railwaymen, for instance, would naturally be far more politically powerful than the school-teachers, a state of affairs most inimical to democratic theory. Moreover, the adoption of economic action by the workers would leave them without the right to protest against similar conduct on the part of the employers. It is possible, that should Labour win political power at the polls, Big Business could, by direct action, make it almost impossible for them to carry on government. This would be disgraceful, if Labour had a clear and undisputed majority in the country, but Labour would not be in a strong position for denunciation, if it was already guilty of similar practices. About direct action in political affairs one feels that, if the community were genuinely and unitedly opposed to the conduct of the Government, it could, in most cases, achieve its end by a political campaign: if the community did not feel and act in unison on the point in question, then there is no case for direct action.

But it must be noted that this statement carries a limitation, "in most cases." It is a historical fact that Governments have often refused to listen to constitutional pleas and have been forced, and rightly forced, to yield to violence or the threat of it. We owe our Reform Bill of 1832

to direct action: we owe the abolition of monarchical despotism to direct action: America owes its primary freedom to direct action. Law and order is an essential of social life, but it can be bought at too great a cost. To bring the legal sovereign into constant contempt is to upset the whole basis of community, but it may at times be a moral duty to act illegally. The truth that underlies the fiction of a social contract is that government rests upon agreement. We give our rulers powers on the understanding that they are going to do certain things: that is our tacit contract. If they refuse to do those things, if they laugh at protests and abuse their legal sovereignty for immoral ends, then it is they who have broken the social contract, they who justify an appeal to direct action. There are limits to human endurance. For the sake of keeping up our social life with all its tremendous advantages, the governed must stay their hands from wanton attacks upon the political system: but for the sake of their own self-respect they must remember their rights.

It is left then to the individual judgment to decide at what point the Government has broken all bounds of decency and must be fought tooth and nail. Individual temperament and proclivity will mould individual judgment; one man will emphasise the vital necessity to a community of keeping law and order and maintaining, even

at a heavy cost of inconvenience, the constitutional fabric; another will feel that the risks of anarchy have been overrated and that the horrors of strife are balanced by the horrors of an irresponsible despotism. It is on these lines that the average citizen will have to make up his mind when the crisis comes. He will have to contrast in his mind two things of value; on the one side the necessity of making representative government a reality and keeping the license of elected people in subjection, on the other the very real hazard of introducing revolutionary methods into the sphere of civic life, the very essence of which is the substitution of public law for individual caprice. The issue may often be complicated. It will be disputed, for instance, whether the particular case has not an economic side; and few people now dispute the right to use economic weapons in economic strife. Or it may be argued that, under the existing capitalist system, rich industrial monopolists control the political machine and are always using direct action in subtle and secret forms by way of pressure on Ministers, bribes and so forth. Through all this maze of argument the seeker for true democracy must force his way, but in the end he will always come up against the same problem. Is this a case where a moral man would do his best, in the common cause, to defy the legal Sovereign? And that question he must answer for himself.

We can only tell him that history has shown us many righteous revolutions: but that a revolution is a desperate measure and that desperate measures, like high explosives, may re-act very nastily on those who handle them.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Democratic Guarantees—8 The Official

Legislation is, at best, a cumbrous and lengthy affair. In Great Britain a Bill must be read three times and passed through Committee in two Houses before it receives the King's assent and, becoming an Act, takes its place among the laws of the land. Even a hustled measure, passed with Opposition consent, cannot entirely avoid publicity and with publicity comes discussion. The measure may in certain circumstances be flagrantly unpopular, but at any rate the public can watch the events and take note of them with a view to future action, even if it cannot prevent them at the time. But executive action is instantaneous: only its results are lasting. An official can arrange in a few minutes a war that will last for years, and that official will be the last person to fight in it or even to suffer by it. Another official may casually spend in a day what an army of taxpayers contributes with labour in a year, and just as no one hears of the war until it is irrevocably declared, so no one hears of the expenditure until the bill comes in. Truly the "never-ending audacity of elected

persons" is the bane of democracy, and the popular control of executive power the thorniest problem to be faced by the democrat.

The immense difficulty of controlling the executive official can best be realised by a glance at one concrete example, the government and administration of Great Britain. According to the theory of our Constitution the executive power is dependent upon and responsible to the legislature; a sound and salutory theory, since the legislature is, in its turn, dependent upon and responsible to the electorate. But things do not, unfortunately, work out in so simple a fashion. The connecting link between the administration and the legislation is the Minister who is both a Member of Parliament and in charge of an Executive Department. But the Minister himself is only democratically appointed in a remote degree. He is appointed by the Prime Minister, who in turn is usually the leading member of the party which holds a majority. How he came to be leading member is frequently complicated and not particularly "democratic" history. So the Minister is only appointed by popular vote, in so far as he has made his way to the front, by fair means or foul, of the party which has recently won a general election. But, after all, what matters is not men but measures. Be the Minister who he may or whence he may, he is answerable to the legislature for the lawful, economical, and

honourable management of one Department of State.

He is "answerable to the legislature." But how can that responsibility be enforced? In the first place questions may be put to him by members on the working of his department, and an irrepressible heckler may make himself a genuine nuisance. Ministers are to a certain extent afraid of persistent questioning about blunders and misdemeanours, but questions can as a rule be evaded or diplomatically answered. Answers to questions do find their way into print and may even reach disgusted electors. But Ministers soon learn the ways and means of silence and evasion. The second guarantee is a motion for reducing the Minister's salary, which is in fact a vote of censure. Now, at the time of writing, the British Constitution is in ruins, but with the disappearance of Mr. Lloyd George, who rightly or wrongly substituted dictatorship for Cabinet Government, it may possibly be restored. If Cabinet Government returns, then the fate of one Minister is the fate of all. If one is censured, all must resign. An error in cordite blew the Liberal Government to pieces in 1895. That is the meaning of collective ministerial responsibility.

Consequently the passing of a vote of censure by the House of Commons is a very serious matter. It will probably entail a General Election, which

for the average member is a costly, arduous, and risky affair. He, therefore, is in no mood to see votes of censure passed and will have every temptation to ensure that no such disaster takes place, be the misdemeanours of the Ministers or his departmental officials never so grave. A policy of hush-hush is to the advantage of every one, save the tax-paying elector, who will have to pay the bill to cover up the blunder. Of course, the mere fact that a vote of censure has been moved may do the Minister in question a certain amount of harm as far as his reputation goes, but ministerial skins soon become remarkably thick. To put the matter roughly, a vote of censure is very rarely passed, and as a method of safeguarding the interests of the people against the incompetence or dishonesty of officialdom it is extremely inadequate.

It will be seen then that the executive official stands in an extremely strong position. He is shielded by a Minister who is in turn shielded by a Parliamentary majority, only too eager to escape the worry and perils of a vote of censure. Perhaps we have stressed the danger to people's power latent in officialism over-much, but there is no use in blinding our eyes to the obvious difficulties of the situation.

The official is so securely hidden from the rude, public eye. He has no visible presence, but when challenged, he emits, like the cuttle-fish, an

offensive discharge of ink. He is made manifest only in long yellow envelopes and in documents "not understanded of the people." The hand remains hidden, but the weight is very perceptible when his agent, the tax-gatherer, comes upon his rounds. Of course, he is still responsible in theory to the Sovereign People, a fantastic theory. For should an indignant public, roused by some more than usually foolish and extravagant raid upon its hen-roosts, demand an end of this fox and call out the hounds, then the chase is hard indeed: the fox takes earth at once, and this no mere burrow in the sand, penetrable in half an hour with spade and terrier, but a spacious cavern in the rocks with passages, galleries, and maze complete, in fact, an elegant and many-roomed hotel. In theory the huntsman with horses, hounds, and terriers, should make short work of a single beast, a miserable defenceless fox. But this fox takes no cross-country run, for he knows how to sit tight in his fastness. So the crafty official takes no risks with a debate in Parliament, feeble chasing though that may often be. He keeps to his many-chambered earth and sends out a wretched Under-Secretary to lead the hounds away.

Yet there is another side to this question: another plea which must be fairly put. There are in the world such people as obstructionists, deliberate nuisances: there are also people who

with the best and most humane intentions, are perfectly capable of so indulging their doubts and scruples that they will harass and hinder the rough and ready work of the nation, which must somehow or other be got through. Against perpetual interruption and perpetual criticism of a destructive order the man of action, the executive official, has a perfect right to demand protection. It cannot be too often emphasised that an excess of democratic guarantees and an over-elaborated machinery of checks may prove in the long run to benefit democratic theory at the expense of human welfare. Here, as in the case of safeguards against undemocratic action by elected legislators, some form of compromise must be found. The ship of State must be steered between the Scylla of pettifogging obstruction and the Charybdis of an autocratic bureaucracy.

It is in the sphere of foreign policy that the executive official has always enjoyed the most unfettered license, and it is just here that his actions have the most terrible and far-reaching results. The claim of the diplomat that he must be allowed to work at liberty because of the importance of his task, is idle; the more important his task, the more necessary is it that he should recognise his master, the people. During the war the diplomats and their hangers on in every nation displayed the minimum of common sense with the maximum of pompous insolence. Any

suggestion of democratic control they have always regarded as outrageous, but the human beings, whom they annex and bargain away, and conscribe and starve and regard as mere contemptible pawns in their own immortal game, are, after all, their paymasters and employers.

Something then, must be done. It is impossible for the individual citizen to exercise any effective check in person on the doings of the bureaucracy. But it is not impossible to make the responsibility of the executive to the legislature a definite reality. At present a desultory discussion is raised from time to time on the vote for a minister's salary. What is needed is something far more drastic. They order these things better in France. Committees of the French Chamber are formed to inquire into, and to criticise the actions of the executive departments, and these committees do exercise considerable influence. In Great Britain, Commissions are occasionally granted to inquire into particular scandals, but that is not enough. Committees of the legislature should be in permanent session, powerful enough to displace a minister, and thus efficient to prevent such scandals arising. The value of such Committees will naturally be the value of the members who compose them, and the value of the component members will be decided by the type of man sent into Parliament by the

electorate. And these committees will only be alert and effective when the members of Parliament are in a temper to insist on their maintaining a high level of industry and criticism.

That is how the responsibility falls on the ordinary citizen. He must realise that he and his fellows are the base of the governmental pyramid and that if that pyramid weighs heavily upon them, they can in the last resort bring the whole thing to the ground. Theirs is the ultimate sovereignty. No man has a right to throw stones at the bureaucracy unless he is himself always an alert, energetic, and critical citizen. The first step in democratic control must come from the democracy. "Virtue! A fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus!" What right have we to complain of insolent and overbearing officials when not twenty per cent. of Londoners will face the infinitesimal nuisance of voting at an election to decide the Government of the Metropolis? Those who are determined to sleep by the road-side cannot complain of the practical jokes of passing children. Amiable professors may create a pseudo-science of civics, as if citizenship consisted of anything more than applied morality and common sense. Our first civic duty is to discard the pleasant vice of sleeping; those who clamour for rights, must be prepared to shoulder duties. Before we can set out to demand guarantees from the bureaucracy

and to institute a check upon officials we must have both the energy and the ability to do our civic duty widespread throughout the commonwealth.

It would be the merest impertinence to attempt, in such short essays as these, to supply cut and dried remedies for the age long difficulties of political life. To suggest that by merely whispering the words "Parliamentary Committee," the problem of democratic control had been solved, would be vanity indeed. Our purpose is to insist on the fact that "democracy," or people's power has not been realised by the creation of even a truly representative assembly.

It is something to have achieved that, but that accomplished, machinery must be devised for keeping that assembly representative or for ensuring the subordination of the executive office through the legislature to the Sovereign People. It is just here that democracies have most signally failed; consequently, it is just here that democrats must make their greatest effort. The first duty of every honest political thinker is to emphasise the extraordinary difficulty of democracy. Shallow minds imagine that a mere distribution of power by the wide granting of votes and privileges will bring democracy to any easy birth. Far from it. Democracy is essentially a challenge, and it is a challenge to the individual. He must realise his own responsibili-

ties; he must see that the right to vote is a very different thing from the ability to vote, and that unless he is master of both, he, the boasted freeman, is simply the slave of his professsional mentors and his paid officials. There is no good thing which can be won and held without effort; if then, as is generally supposed, democracy is a good form of government, it lays, by virtue of its goodness, a tremendous responsibility on the people. We have all heard the saying that the corruption of the best is worst, and this is certainly true of democracy. In a state where the people have full rights without an adequate conception of duties, power passes rapidly into the hands of a governing caste who dole out bread and circuses to the careless mob in return for an undisputed sway. Few methods of government could exercise a more fatal effect upon the human soul. The servile state, with a veneer of democracy, is perhaps the vilest form of rule known to man. Only vigilence and hard work can defeat it, and they, for the citizen already busy with his own affairs, are tiresome things. But they are essential.

Does the road wind uphill all the way ?
Yes, to the very end,
Will the day's journey take the whole long day ?
From morn to night, my friend.

CHAPTER NINE.

Democracy and Plutocracy

We come now to the discussion of a most intricate and, at the same time, a most critical problem. So far, we have endeavoured to trace the meaning of the word democracy, and to show the various paths of thought and of action which must be followed in order to reach our goal of people's power. We have investigated the political machinery which must be set up, and we have emphasised the necessity of popular energy and popular alertness to keep that machinery in order and to prevent the servant exercising dominion over its master. Now we have to face the criticism of those who see in political democracy nothing but a gigantic illusion. These critics examine and interpret the history of man from one point of view alone, the economic. To them, the history of man is the history of wealth, the history of power is the history of money. Consequently, they urge that any attempt to realise an ideal of people's power must be primarily a matter of economics. If money is power, then a state in which money and property are unequally divided cannot be

"democratic." "Political democracy" is to them, as Mrs. Harris to the friends of Mrs. Gamp. One hears a great deal about it, but when one comes to look for it in reality, "there isn't any." Liberty, they say, goes with equality, and equality of rights is nothing without equality of property. Political democracy is nothing but a mirage, or rather, it is a stage will-o'-the-wisp, contrived by the artful capitalist to lead the worker even farther into the dreary and unprofitable bog of political action. They regard political Socialism as a waste of Socialistic effort, and, therefore, as a rich man's friend. Democracy is a pretty word, plutocracy the ugly fact. This point of view is often powerfully argued, and demands careful investigation. The first thing to realise is its lack of precision. The economic interpretation of history carries with it the corollary that all power is economic, and therefore, that all efforts to create people's power must be economic too. The economic interpretation of history is often phrased in a way which renders it philosophically unsound. We may be told, for instance, that man is purely an economic creature, and that all his aspirations and activities are bound by economic fact. This view abstracts from man one side of his nature, and calls that side, man. But the spirit of man is not susceptible to these abstractions. And if such abstractions are to take place, why should

not we abstract the moral, the religious, the artistic phrases of human nature, and interpret history morally, religiously, or artistically? The spirit of man is, like life, a dome of many-coloured glass, and, by looking through now one pane, and now another, we can stain the bright radiance of truth as we choose; it is not by many separate glances through many separate panes that we shall attain truth, but only by the use of synthesis and imagination. In other words, we can interpret any set of historical events as we please, but interpretation on the basis of a simplified humanity, with only one governing motive, will always be false. Many European wars have been fought over points of religion; but we cannot argue from this, that all man's actions are bounded by religious considerations. Other wars have been waged for economic reasons; but we cannot argue that men are only concerned with wealth. Still, other wars, e.g., the civil war against Charles the First, was based on mixed political and religious emotions. The great world war of 1914 was caused by a vast conglomeration of causes. Doubtless, economic aspirations had much to do with its origin, but the morale of the peoples' who fought it in the field, and worked for it at home, was certainly kept up by loftier considerations. This war surely proved that men were willing to undergo the most extreme dangers and hardships for a

great many different reasons. Some may have fought for one purpose, some for another, but in very few of the actual fighters were economic considerations preponderant.

Classification is essentially the task of science, and most men of science make ridiculous claims for their work. Classification is continually discovering pieces of truth and mistaking them for the whole truth. But life cannot be cut up into slices and examined at leisure under the microscope of science. Its virtue is its change and progression, and no sooner has the scientist made one classification than nature eludes him. Classification has its uses of course, but, if it does not acknowledge its limitations, it rapidly passes from the useful servant to the tyrannous master. Accordingly, the attempt to cut up the spirit of man and human history, which is the work of that spirit, is bound to give a false impression. To interpret history economically will undoubtedly clear up some points of history, but that single method cannot be everywhere applied. An artistic interpretation of history would almost certainly aid the student to understand Periclean Athens, while the downfall of Rome has been "hygienically" interpreted by some who see in malaria the great destroyer of the empire. The Great War can be interpreted economically, morally, racially, or even religiously. But, though one interpretation can throw an interesting

searchlight on one series of events, it cannot faithfully interpret the whole. The true historian of humanity needs something far greater than the pedestrian virtues of science, accuracy of classification and abstraction. He needs imagination with discretion, knowledge with judgment.

The economic interpretation of history therefore, is neither a true method, nor a false. It is a method whose virtue depends entirely on its application. But the assumption that man is a creature "economically determined," or bound in his aspirations and achievements by the eternal consideration of gain and loss, is fundamentally unsound. Let us then come to an examination of Plutocracy without the bias of a crude economic determinism. Acknowledging the free and diverse activity of man, let us investigate the statement that property is power, with its implication that true liberty can never be won in the political battlefield.

Property is powerful, of course. But is it the sole source of power? That is the crucial question. If it can be shown that property is the source of power, then obviously, until property is socialised, there can be no such thing as people's power, no democracy. But there is a very great gulf between the statements that property is powerful, and that property is the sole source of power. True to our principle of definition, we must ensure that we clearly understand what we

mean by "power." "Power" is the ability to control the action of others. If this definition holds, then property is not the only powerful thing in the world. The personality of a man who can influence thousands of others with his creed or his eloquence is powerful. The idea or ideals which have claimed thousands of willing martyrs are powerful. They have so tremendously controlled the actions of others that they have led them to torture or the grave.

But, it may be argued, property beats them in the end. Christianity began to put up a stern fight against property, and property defeated Christianity by a discreet surrender. It adopted Christianity and gave it the chloroform of respectability, leaving it the poor, limp, bleating thing it is to-day. It certainly made short work of Christianity as an institution, but it can never destroy Christianity, the idea. The scattered individuals who detest Christianity, the institution with its array of bishops, and priests, and sacerdotal humbug, will always be drawing inspiration from the ideals of the New Testament—whether they profess and call themselves Christians, matters not a jot—and will be influencing the movement of society. In the same way, it seems that property may kill Socialism, the institution, by adopting it, but scattered individuals will continue to be moved by the ideas of Socialism, and will

continually be working their ideas into the texture of society. Property can always capture and annex an institution, but it can never annihilate an idea. And it is the idea that matters. The idea comes first. The economic materialist may argue that, political democracy being mere fudge, true liberty will be established when property is equalised or socialised, possession being ten-tenths of the law. But the question that concerns us in a search for the source of power, is "What will move men to take this action"? And the answer is the idea or the ideal of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Envy and greed carry men only to short-lived triumphs and disputed divisions of loot; only an ideal can give the endurance and the cohesion that makes the wingless victory.

If property is the sole source of power, then all government is plutocratic. A socialised administration would be plutocratic: in this case, the wealth, which is power, would be commonly held, and so, the people and the property being on the same side, there would be a democratic plutocracy. But property, though powerful, is not the sole source of power. It remains, therefore, to consider the extent of the power of the property, and its relation to political democracy. Let us first put the case of one who doubts the value of political action. "I do not bind myself," he might say, "with the rigid tenets of economic

determinism. I am no doctrinaire laying the fetters of immutable law upon the soul of man, which I conceive to be freely self-determinant. But I take the world as I find it, and do not allow the fine phrases of political theory to blind me to the facts of every day life. The whole history of British politics, to take a single instance, has demonstrated the futility of political liberalism. Votes, without Trade Unions, brought no benefit to the working classes. At first the possessing classes fell into a panic at the idea of extending the suffrage and prophesied, as they always do, the end of all things. But they very soon realised that the various extensions of voting-power made not the slightest difference to their own position. By their control of wealth they controlled the Press, which supplied the half-educated with their "ideas." By their control of wealth they also retained their control of the administrative machine, which is really so much more important to them than Parliament. The workers, doubtless, received a few sedatives—factory legislation, which left the factories more productive; and unemployment exchanges, which left labour more "mobile," and therefore more profitable to handle. But what really terrifies the economically powerful is the threat of economic action. They know that one strike can do them more harm than a century of Parliaments. They know that labour is essential to

their wealth, and that the withdrawal of labour alone can undermine their position. They have long known what the workers are only beginning to realise, that economic power precedes political power, and that the organisation of labour into an army of blackleg-proof Industrial Unions will soon turn empty rights into stern realities. Freedom, a word they used to play with happily at election times, and in the columns of their bought Press, may become a very sword or scourge when the will to be free is backed, not by ballot papers, but by the irresistible logic of folded arms. That is why power in the community to-day is rapidly becoming limited to two rigid classes—the Syndicate monopolists of capital, and the Trade Union monopolists of labour. Parliamentary government is more of a futility than ever, and the administration of the commonwealth is carried on by secret Conferences where bargains are driven between the two great rivals. Ministers are mere go-betweens, running from one camp to the other, and pay scant heed to the House whence they derive their offices and emoluments. Now, it is the middle, the professional class who are the weakest, for the simple reason that in most cases they have only political rights to shield them. With a few exceptions their labour is unorganised and, in the last resort, the community could exist at least temporarily without it. If there was a

sudden withdrawal, either at the instance of Capital or of Labour, of such vital commodities as bread, coal, or transport, the community would perish. But solicitors, barristers, clergymen, authors, even doctors, schoolmasters, and journalists might kick their heels for a month or two without irretrievable disaster to our material needs. Votes they have, but power they have not. Only the economically indispensable may claim to be the repositories of power. That being the case, it becomes the very form and fashion of futility to continue a philosophy of political democracy, and to build new towers of hope upon a foundation of purely political right."

What answer can be made to such a plea? The imaginary apologist for economic action took his ground as a man of the world, and on his own ground he has surely given a just description of life as we know it. Parliamentary government has, in fact, yielded in a large measure to industrial bargaining; threats of industrial action are applied to gain political ends, and such threats carry weight. The middle-class is being rapidly forced into an economic position where the maintenance of even a small family is an intolerable burden. But, after all, we are not concerned only with facts, important as these facts are. We are concerned—and there is no cause to be ashamed of our concern—with possibilities as well as with the

present, with "oughts" as well as with "ares." Granted that economic power does at present precede all political power, is it necessarily vain to discuss politics at all?

If man is free, the determining factor in his own method and condition of life, then assuredly man is not the slave of economic forces. Here, as in nearly all social questions, responsibility comes back to the individual. It is because man has not shown the eternal vigilance which is the price of freedom that Parliamentary government has fallen into decay. In a state where all electors used their votes and use them with forethought, where they kept a check upon their representatives and their representatives kept a check upon their officials, there could be a reality of the people's power. But suppose land and capital remained in a few hands, would not these monopolists be able to dictate to the electors? Under average conditions, yes. But given our keen electors, and the answer is different. A vote is a vote and commands its members, and the members command the Government. The Government commands force, should force be needed. Thus, if the few rich men obstructed the community, the community could return a Government to protect their own interests, and could insist on their interests being regarded. It is as much due to civic apathy as to their own economic power that the possessing classes hold

the immensely strong position in which they are now entrenched. Under present conditions it is far easier for the working classes to fight their way to liberty by economic action, in as much as the strike, though entailing many hardships, does work swiftly, while the Parliamentary coach lumbers slowly forward. At all times it is only common sense for those who are engaged in a struggle to sharpen and prepare all the weapons at their command. Nothing would be more foolish than to throw away the sword of Trade Unionism. But this admission does not prove that the sword is the only weapon.

Life has many facets, and man's activities are not economic alone. By all means let us have an economic democracy for the economic aspects of life; by no means let us limit both our outlook and our democracy to the economic aspect. A man has many things in common with his neighbour apart from his industry, and it is for the maintenance of these common rights and duties, arts and pleasures, traditions and affections, that the political organisation of society exists. This is the proper sphere of political action. Nor are such matters inferior in themselves to industrial concerns. But in our community they have been rendered trivial by the vastness of industrial warfare beside them. Hence men are driven to believe that only the economic weapon counts; they have despair, tyranny, poverty to justify

them, but from the point of view of eternity they are wrong. "The point of view of eternity"! How heartily might such a phrase be ridiculed! Yet it is not the function of political theory to write only tracts for the times.

To sum up, the times are out of joint. Plutocracy prevails, and Democracy is but an empty name. An empty name, yet even those who realise it most are always asking for more. Strange that the people who are always in an unpopular minority are always the keenest democrats. Their instinct guides them aright. For they see that power lies ultimately with persons, not with institutions, with ideas, and not with property. At present Things are strong and People weak. Property holds down idealism, but that is not an eternal and immutable fact. The fault is in ourselves and in ourselves the remedy. Grant the determinist position and make economic laws the masters of men instead of mental fictions for the classification and explanation of events, and there is no more to be said. But if men are not so bound, then, all economic considerations apart, plutocracy can be destroyed whenever the people, animated by the ideal of democracy and yet tempering their ideal with energy and practical application, choose to assert their power. For that reason political theory is justified in considering the problem of democracy apart from its economic aspect. Such a statement must not

be taken to deny the extraordinary importance, especially in our present discontents, of Trade Unionism and industrial bargaining. But it is meant as a protest against those who can see nothing in politics but futility, nothing in political democracy "but a dangerous illusion." If the rich have still their pocket boroughs, whose fault is that? If Labour members go astray, is it always "the system" that is to blame? There is no one so cocksure as the denouncer of politics, but he must take his blame with the rest of us and remember that even Socialists have their own particular glass-houses.

CHAPTER TEN

Democracy and Liberty

It is often assumed that democracy and liberty are the necessary complements to one another and that, where democracy is found, there will liberty be also. Those who thirst for liberty are usually most active in the democratic ranks, and often democracy is championed, not so much as a form of government conducive to human happiness, but as an efficient short cut to liberty. Yet on the face of it there seems to be no good reason why the two should be inseparable companions. Liberty is a vague term and may mean all things to all men; but some definition of it we must have. The man in the street, when asked to define liberty, would probably say, "Doing what you like"; and this, translated into terms acceptable to the dignity of a philosopher, means "the power of self-direction." A state of liberty, then, is roughly one in which people are not guided by external authority, but determine for themselves the way in which they are to live. But liberty, like other abstract ideas, becomes meaningless unless it can be translated into terms of actual experience, unless, that is to say, individual

people are in practice enjoying the right of self-determination. Unless liberty means the liberty of actual people, of Tom, Dick, and Harry, it is nothing. This point may seem obvious, yet current events prove that it is not so. There are many people, and usually they are people of weight and influence, who can imagine a Free State in which the vast majority are in reality slaves. They call the state free because it is an independent sovereign state among other independent sovereign states, but the freedom is strictly limited to the state, and is not enjoyed by the individuals who compose it. These individuals are to be governed by a superior class of the community, usually rich and preternaturally stupid, and this class is supposed to voice the real will of the people and to tell the poor and the many what is their "real good." In time, the many will be sent out to fight for "their freedom," otherwise the freedom of the state, and to champion the cause of liberty! This so-called Prussian outlook upon life is common in every country, and its prevalence serves to prove how extraordinarily dangerous it is to talk of liberty without emphasising the liberty of the individual. It stands to the eternal credit of the British Utilitarians, now despised as "shallow," that they did realise this truth, while our Hegelian metaphysicians, who are still fashionable, have played with their theory of the state into the

hands of the bureaucrats, secret diplomatists, war-lords, and all the fraudulent "Great Men" who have reduced Europe to its present intolerable suffering.

Accordingly, when we make use of the term liberty we must at the same time explain and emphasise our explanation that we are referring to the liberty, not of an abstraction, but of definite people. Regarding it in this light, we can return to our consideration of democracy. Democracy we have defined as people's power, and the realisation of this people's power demands in most cases the System of Representative Government. Representative government implies majority rule. But does majority rule imply liberty as we understand the word?

In so far as the majority in a democratic community can control the actions of the whole community, whereas under a tyranny or an oligarchy the majority simply allows itself to be driven by an irresponsible authority, it is certainly true that democracy is a liberal institution. After all, something of liberty has been achieved when the majority drives the minority in place of the minority driving the majority. But democracy as such, democracy without further limitations or definition has no further necessary connection with liberty. It is quite conceivable that, from the minority point of view, majority rule might be the most odious form of tyranny, and it is well

to bear in mind that a small majority is legally as powerful as a large one. A majority of one might legally pass measures inflicting the most severe disabilities on the minority and, if the minority consisted of strict legalists with a horror of lawlessness, it would have to put up with its fate, not in silence perhaps, but certainly with patient protest. It is quite conceivable that under an enlightened tyranny, individual freedom and respect for minority rights might be far better safeguarded than under a rough-and-ready democracy.* For this reason it is not enough to follow the popular habit and to assume that democratic institutions will inevitably create personal liberty. It may be just to accept the common belief that the genuine fulfilment of democracy implies the complete realisation of liberty, and so it is imperative that, if we are to discuss democracy in full, we should commit ourselves to a more detailed inquiry into the nature of political liberty and the conditions of its successful achievement. Liberty is a term as vague as democracy, and has been equally abused. Strangely enough, in both cases, men are far more ready to die for their ideals than to define them.

The Limits of State Control is a conventional

* The position of negroes in the Southern States of "democratic" America.

name for the problem which we are to discuss, but it must certainly be altered. We are not concerned with States alone and with national governments, but with every form of social organisation. Wherever there is common action, there the problem of liberty arises, and to say that we are discussing the Limits of Collective Control is more suited to our purpose, because of its more general application. Our task, then, is to discuss whether there are any constant principles underlying the mass of administrative fact, whether the political theorist or the philosopher can be of any use to the statesman who is called upon to administer, or to the citizen who should criticise and control administration. It might seem at first sight that in questions such as these the solution must be left to the common sense of those who have all the facts before them: it may be argued, for instance, that the rights and wrongs of total prohibition of alcohol cannot be settled in the philosopher's study, but depend entirely upon masses of statistics supplied by Criminal Departments and Health Authorities. That, however, is a common but complete illusion. It is the illusion of what is known as Business Government. Infuriated by the failures of statesmen whose education has been highly theoretical, people are apt to turn to so-called Men of the World, whose chief claim to power is that they have had no education at all. Because one party

has suffered from too much theory and too little practice, the popular temptation is to discredit theory altogether and to demand "practical men." But the practical man, however hopeful or self-confident he may be rendered at the outset by his previous successful manipulation of margarine or tramp-steamers, realises with grief in time that the government of human beings is something different from the management of markets, and that where human nature is concerned, a knowledge is demanded far deeper than mathematical calculation. Statistics are needed; energy is needed; swift decisions are needed; but all these things without some underlying principles are worth nothing. They form a rudderless ship. The practical man is singled out with joy because he can get things done; the trouble is that he rarely knows what to do. It is our business, therefore, to search for principles of right government in this matter of collective control, not because the principles can take the place of knowledge, energy, and common sense, but because without them these virtues are as useless as engines without drivers. Nor are such principles matters of great complication or of intricate philosophy; they are simply the bases of political action that suggest themselves upon reflection.

There is something supremely simple, for instance, in the theory propounded by John

Stuart Mill, who classified human actions in two divisions, separating self-regarding from other-regarding conduct. In the sphere of self-regarding conduct there is no case, he argued, for collective control, but where the results of a man's behaviour affect other people, the community has a right to interfere. This test was so excessively simple that it caused not a little ridicule: Hegelians immediately replied that society was an organism and that it was impossible to consider the individual except in relation to society: there was, in fact, no such thing as purely self-regarding action, and consequently Mill's criterion was held to be quite useless. But Mill was not really such a fool as his self-satisfied critics imagined. He would have been the first to admit that all a man's conduct must re-act somehow and at some time upon other people, but he knew that in political matters we are only working in rough outline. The practical issue was for him that some of our actions do concern ourselves more than other people, while others have a wide social significance. For instance, it matters not one jot to me what god or when or why or how the Salvation Army worships, providing the Army is confined to its barracks, but when the Army, with band complete, arrives outside my window in order to sing praises in public, their conduct passes from self-regarding to other-regarding with a vengeance. My liberty is grossly interfered

with, because, so long as their worship continues I am unable to read, write, or think, and am rendered incapable of everything except hatred. That is an obvious instance where J. S. Mill's criterion works admirably. It is all a case of "more or less," and we have to judge for ourselves where to draw the line. What we have to aim at is the promotion of as much freedom as possible; that is to say, collective interference is justified where it serves to remove barriers to liberty. Compulsory education of children may seem to be an invasion of individual rights, but it can be defended on the ground that it does in the end guarantee more freedom than it destroys. For if children are pitch-forked into the world without knowledge or training, they are far more at the mercy of their superiors in wealth and wisdom than if they have been educated. By destroying their childish liberty, we make some effort to enable them to be free men in later years. We should not seek to make men good by act of Parliament; but we should certainly seek to give them every chance to be good. If collective control abolishes human choice, it does a great harm; its object should be to place all in a position where they have the ability and the opportunity to make a free choice. Compulsory education does at least endeavour to put the nation in this position and can be justified on that ground.

Mill's test is not a final or a complete test. It

needs expansion and criticism, but it is not merely idle; it turns us in the right direction. Reflection will swiftly add other principles which can be applied to the consideration of collective control. A statesman, for instance, should always ask of any measure whether it can actually be carried out. This criterion may seem so patent as to be useless, yet our history is strewn with the wrecks of measures that were ruined by no other vice than their own impossibility of application. To take an extreme example, a law insisting that every one should say his prayers at night would be quite ridiculous, not only because forced prayers are no prayers, but because it could never be enforced. The No Treating Order, which prevailed in Great Britain during the war, was a dead letter in most places, and, if the teetotal party had endeavoured to make it permanent, they could only have done it by obtaining complete prohibition. They could, of course, have obtained their statute, but they could not have made the statute an actually recognised law. Not only does such an order run (thank heaven!) against the grain of human nature, but its enforcement needs the presence or the threatened presence of a policeman or a spy in all licensed premises. And few policemen would care to enforce such a miserable decree. The statesman has, above all, to bear in mind that the multiplication of laws upon petty subjects is a most

dangerous procedure. The more laws there are, the less easy is it for people to remember them and for officials to enforce them. A vast mass of complex and technical legislation is dangerous to a community because it encourages a general neglect and distrust of law. The continued existence of laws which nobody obeys because they are inherently ridiculous simply generates a widespread contempt for all form of authority. A schoolmaster soon discovers that the simplest way to maintain discipline is to have as few rules as possible and to insist on those rules being kept. There is nothing so provocative of rebellion as an enormous series of "Dont's" and the continued process of repression. It was this psychological truth that enabled the Little Commonwealth to build so successfully on a basis of freedom. There is a hateful type of mind, regrettably common, which glories in discipline for discipline's sake; but this type of mind, after making life miserable for thousands of innocent people, defeats its own end by setting up a violent counter-suggestion and causing people to rejoice, equally foolishly, in rebellion for rebellion's sake. The logical outcome of Militarism is Bolshevism.* In the same way the legislator will come to realise if he is prudent, that his goal should be a

* I use the term in its newspaper sense, i.e., a kind of riotous anarchism.

minimum of law and a maximum of respect for law. This respect can only be created if he sees that his measures are not inherently futile because, however worthy the object, they simply cannot be put into effect. What the statesman has particularly to create is an atmosphere favourable to law; men are perfectly willing to sacrifice liberties when they know that those sacrifices are not to be made null and void by official incompetence. Man is naturally law-abiding, until he finds his back broken by the legal burden.

Another question which should be asked about every measure involving collective control is whether it can achieve its object, presumably a good one, without displacing an equal or a greater amount of good. It is perfectly possible, for instance, that a law which produces one beneficial result may produce a series of detrimental consequences as well. A prohibition of alcoholic liquors in this country would obviously produce some good material results; it would make impossible the more bestial forms of drunkenness and might abolish a certain amount of crime, poverty, and disease. Here, then, are certain definite forms of good to be derived from such a measure. On the other hand, it is perfectly obvious that legislation of this type does reduce the citizen to the level of the schoolboy. It is a step towards the triumph of the Superior Person, whose object is to impose his idea of

morality upon the masses. But morality is not a thing to be imposed or imported; its creation is essentially a home industry. The more people become accustomed to having virtue thrust upon them, the more irresponsible and childish will they become. We are under no obligation to make a final judgment on so intricate a problem; it has simply been brought up to demonstrate how one measure might promise much good of one kind and destroy much good of another. The dilemma of "England free or England sober?" is a real one and shows how necessary it is to balance conflicting values. What concerns us for the moment is the duty of the legislator to discover whether the spiritual damage done by some policy of collective control would not outweigh the positive practical advantage at which it aims.

And, in the third place, it is necessary to ask of any proposed interference whether the sphere of action is one in which spontaneity is essential. To try and regulate the freedom of thought, for instance, is the idlest form of folly. Even if it is desirable, no force on earth can drive a man to agree with you; it may drive him to say falsely that he does agree with you, but it cannot control his real process of thought. Free speech in the same way should certainly be left as an untouched, unhampered right, for the simple reason that if it is not free it ceases to be speech in any real sense

of the word. The only result of limitation on the freedom of speech is the creation of compulsory liars, scarcely a creditable form of collective activity. While it may reasonably be argued that what a man thinks and says does affect other people strongly, this does not justify the interference of society. The right weapon against false doctrine is true doctrine. Those Christians, for instance, who are for ever demanding the imprisonment and persecution of unbelievers, might stop to realise the foolishness of their position. If their religion cannot stand the criticisms and possibly the insults of a few park-orators, it must indeed be a flimsy erection. In the same way a State, which in time of war persecutes anyone who disputes the justice of the national cause, displays small confidence in its own conduct. If the war is just then the diatribes of a minority will do no harm; if it is unjust, then the critics deserve a national reward. Oppression is the tool of ignorance and fear; it is hard indeed to conceive of any harm coming to society through freedom of thought and speech. Again, history records age-long persecutions for religious reasons, every one of them futile. There can be no possible fragment of value in a faith adopted under compulsion. True religion is essentially an individual thing, an aspiration, a conviction, or a passion; to control it from without is to deaden it within. It is pre-eminently one of those things which

society should refuse to touch. The same applies to all things of the spirit; they stand or fall by their spontaneity. A Ministry of Arts would be an unqualified calamity; translated into hard fact, it would mean elderly bureaucrats clothing Venus in red tape from ten to five. And such clothing is scarcely suited to the goddess.

Here, then, are some practical tests that may be applied to measures of collective control. Of course they cannot be mathematically applied, nor can they ever hope to command universal agreement. But this limitation holds of all political theory. No man can ever, in the last resort, prove that his opponent is finally and fundamentally wrong. All that argument can do is to reveal the views of both and bring them to a mutual understanding, if not to a mutual agreement. Temperament inevitably affects judgment, and there will be many and various decisions as to how the principles of collective control should be put into operation. But we must not allow ourselves to be discouraged by the fact that certainty is beyond our grasp; rather have we all the more reason for a diligent pursuit of first principles, since these principles, though they cannot promise us definite solutions of individual problems, should at least keep us thinking on sound and logical lines.

So far we have dealt solely with legal interference; but social interference is by no means

limited to laws and statutes and the enforcement thereof. In many cases the tyranny of public opinion and convention is far harsher than the tyranny of law. Freedom of thought, speech, and behaviour may be guaranteed by the organised community, but gravely menaced by unorganised individuals. Of all forms of control this is the vilest. Its utter irresponsibility makes it both cruel and powerful, as is seen most clearly in schoolboy life, where the destruction of individuality is the general goal. Toleration is a primary virtue in any community, because without it all individuality is destroyed. And it is the cranks, the dreamers, the despised and rejected of men, who prevent society from sinking into stagnation beyond all recovery. Some of them may be worthless, but others are certainly the salt of the earth and the saviours of future generations. There can be no healthy community which frowns on originality and contempt for tradition, for the social welfare depends to an enormous extent upon the presence of critical power and imaginative minds. Destroy these with ridicule and sneer and the body corporate will perish of a sluggish torpor. If we must exercise some sort of control over the actions of our fellow-citizens, let it at least be the control of law, sanctioned by the legislature, and executed by the recognised officials. Such authority may be abused, but it can never be a tenth part as

dangerous as the irresponsible intolerance of unorganised individuals. This intolerance may burst into a passionate eruption of class hatred and find expression in lynch-law; or, what is almost as bad, it may smoulder on with the slow fires of cynicism, destroying the faith, the spontaneity, and the imagination of all the younger and more active members of society.

Regrettably often democracies stand in need of this warning, for their ruling vice is smug self-satisfaction. Tyrannies may grant far more scope for social freedom than an administration which divides political power among the people. Almost incredible stories are recounted of the persecution meted out in the United States during the war to people who had not subscribed as much as people thought they should to the War Loans. And in Great Britain there was a general feeling that a legal conscription for military service, however undesirable from many points of view, was at least fairer than the private conscription exercised by "patriotic" employers and interfering old women, who proved their loyalty to the cause of freedom by adopting the methods of the slave-driver. Or compare again the miserable folly that drove Dilke and Parnell from public life; for savage intolerance and short-sighted bigotry there is no place like a modern democracy. There is not much use in dethroning kings if we immediately hand the sceptre to

the priest. And, if we have followed the advice of the root-and-branch republican by strangling the last king with the entrails of the last priest, there is nothing to be gained by making a new god of respectability. Democracy in itself is no guarantee of personal liberty. It means, as we saw, nothing more than the division of sovereign power among the people; the vital point is the way in which that power, both legal and social, is used. It will only be used rightly if it is borne in mind that democracy is not an end in itself, but a means to the good life; and the good life must be lived not by a majority, but by all the members of the community. And if we are asked what we hold to be the content of the good life, we should surely reply with universal consent that its primary and most essential element is the reasonable freedom of the individual.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Democracy and Devolution

It has been well said that it was the function of the nineteenth century to liberate: it will be the function of the twentieth to control. The last century set free a host of tremendous forces—national, commercial, and mechanical. That liberty, or rather that license, resulted in a war that has impaired the vital power of the western world, shattered its economy, and ravaged its morality. It is left to the younger generation to chain up the dragons that our fathers loosed: it is left, in fact, to the incipient and distraught democracies to face a task of political and economic and moral reconstruction that might well baffle the sagest of philosopher kings. On every hand the cry is for control, for more government rather than for less government, for a world federation bound by international law to replace the lawless anarchy of sovereign states.

Obviously then, while democracy demands the division of power among the individuals that go to make a community, the world's catastrophe demands a centralisation of power and a check upon individualism both in trade and in national

activities. The problem for us, the problem for the so-called democracies, is to harmonise these apparently conflicting demands, so that government may be at once far more efficient and far more liberal. To give up our sovereignty to the League of Nations, or at least to the common will of humanity, which should, but does not yet, underlie that League, and to retain for the citizen his sense of individuality and self-determination, without which he becomes a mere lifeless fraction of an enormous and a merciless machine, that is the challenge to youth. It is a challenge that cannot be ignored; we must accept it, or we perish. How then can we best face this overwhelming task of extinguishing anarchy and preserving liberty?

We can best begin by recognising our difficulties. The larger the unit of government the harder does it become to achieve a form of democracy that is something more than a name. Naturally the division of power among a very large number of people leaves each individual with a diminutive share in the control of his national affairs. When a small group of people associate voluntarily for some special purpose they can all feel that they have a definite part in the administration of their own concerns. But when a man is one burgher out of five millions, one national unit out of fifty millions, and one citizen of the world out of a thousand millions, how can he be expected to feel

himself a responsible and self-determining individual? How can he be convinced that on his own head, in his own hands, the sin and the saving lie? It is all very well to tell him to use his imagination, and thus to grasp not only his fraternity with the heathen Chinee, but also his share of power in the administration of city, nation, and world. But there are limits even to the richest imagination. Our loaves must depend on the flour we put into the oven: we must take human nature as we find it and put up with its inevitable weakness, if weakness it really be. The hard fact remains that the conditions of our life demand enormous governmental units: economic relations have far outstripped political relations, so that we trade with men about whom we know nothing and care nothing. We must catch up those loose commercial ties with our political organisations, and this demands a world-wide political union. Whether we like it or not, we must be prepared for administration on a tremendous scale. At the very moment when the word "democracy" is resounding across the world, we have to create political institutions which must reduce the sense of power in the individual to the most trifling dimensions. The success of a democracy does ultimately depend upon the extent to which the average citizen throws himself into the work of government and accepts the common responsibility as his own.

Hard enough to achieve in a small unit, this consummation becomes well nigh impossible in a large one. The fact is that the more a democracy grows in size the less democratic it becomes; for as the sense of individual power diminishes among the citizens the greater becomes the influence of the wire-puller and the "careerist," the more complete the victory of the machine over the struggling human element.

Accordingly only one course remains open for those who still believe in the virtues of democracy, or at any rate in the modest proposition that democracy has fewer vices on the whole than any other form of government. They must insist that while political relations are being enlarged and administrative units increased, there must also be a continual devolution of power within those units. At the same time as authority is being gathered to one centre from far-distant fields, it must be dispersed again. Thus and thus only can democracy be made a living reality in our modern and mechanised world.

It is perfectly obvious that our present national Parliaments are dying institutions: some critics say that they do nothing, but the real truth is that they have too much to do. During the war, in Great Britain the State "took over" numerous forms of activity previously left to individual enterprise. It became responsible for food and and some forms of clothing: it "controlled"

this and that and became a trader on its own account. Whether it succeeded or whether it failed does not concern us now. The fact remains that power was gathered up into the hands of executive officials who were theoretically responsible to Parliament. But even before the war Parliamentary business suffered from congestion: naturally this vast imposition of additional and difficult work created a purely farcical sovereignty. Parliament made not the slightest effort to control the controllers. This cession of overwhelming power to the executive helped to increase and intensify the general impression that political democracy is a mere illusion. The sphere of legislation was seen to grow smaller and smaller. Ministers ceased to attend Parliament, except on special occasions, and the business of the country was carried on by a series of clandestine bargains between the State Officials, Big Business, and the Trade Unions. In other words, there was a sporadic showering of patronage on pushing individuals, a lavish distribution of jobs, an intolerable misuse of public funds, and a general doling out of irresponsible power to some of the most undesirable members of society, whom the cauldron of war always brings like an evil scum to the surface. The result, of course, was waste, incompetence, and chaos without end.

Democracy therefore must have its own principles of devolution. Power must be distributed, not

only, as Lord Acton pointed out, because this is the only guarantee of liberty, but also because this is the only guarantee of efficiency. A national Parliament might reasonably be expected to face certain issues and to do its work properly, but one body cannot be expected to superintend such a multitude and such a variety of interests as now are hurled in front of it. Authority must be parcelled out, but on what lines? Common sense answers immediately "According to the principles of function." If men are associated for any purpose, let us use that association: that does not mean that we must truckle to it and accept it as our absolute lord and master, but it does mean that we should make use of the best voluntary structures in designing the architecture of a national government.

Men have various sides to their nature, and consequently various interests and various activities. They have interests as neighbours and interests as workers, interests as players and sportsmen, interests as worshippers, interests as consumers: and, in answer to these interests, they have voluntarily created for themselves various associations. As neighbours, indeed, they are more or less compulsorily enrolled in state or municipality, but as workers and producers they can usually choose their own livelihood and join its appropriate Trade Union or pro-

fessional organisation. As sportsmen they choose their own games and form their own clubs, as consumers they form their own co-operative (or more accurately co-consumptive) societies, and as worshippers they can move according to the dictates of the inner light or according to their taste in music, vestments, and images, joining whatever religious body suits their particular tastes, or abstaining from organised religion altogether. Here are a large number of corporate bodies, built up on the firm foundation of human will and human demand, existing within the state, exercising a large call upon individual loyalty and energy, yet endowed with very little real responsibility. Parliament is over-worked and plainly deficient in capacity for the tremendous work that faces it. Unless all power is to pass irrevocably into the hands of the executive (and that is obviously the tendency of the day) there must be a general devolution. But when the word devolution is mentioned, people at once think of Ireland and of Ulster, possibly of Scotland and Wales. But the term need not be limited to questions of territorial government; it can be applied to any de-centralising effort. And the only form of devolution which seems capable of mastering the complex problems of to-day is devolution by function.

Let us take but a single instance, the control of industry. Men and women spend far more

of their time and their strength upon their ordinary work than upon the consideration of their political questions. Yet strangely the idea of making the administration of work and factory control democratic is comparatively new. That there was something deadening, something utterly inhuman and wrong in the old methods of industrial autocracy on top and wage-slavery below is now so generally recognised that even quite conservative people are supporting the Whitley Councils; it is widely felt that the admission of popular control in a limited way will increase efficiency because it increases responsibility. But if it is desirable to increase responsibility in small matters of workshop amenities and so on, why should it not be desirable to increase responsibility on a far greater scale and to make the workers in any given industry responsible servants of the community, exercising complete control over their own conditions, provided that they render satisfactory service? Let the community, organised as consumers on the old territorial, municipal, and Parliamentary lines, say what it wants: let the community again, organised as producers on the lines of Industrial Unionism, say how that want shall be answered. Here is functional devolution at work. This is but a suggestion. The whole problem of the necessary co-ordinating machinery and of the creation of a sovereign body to adjudicate in case of dispute

between the Parliament and the Guild (or Trade Union) Congress has been discussed in the writings of the Guild Socialists, particularly in Mr. G. D. H. Cole's "Self-Government in Industry." Our present task is not, of course, to deal with so complex an issue in a paragraph, but rather to point out lines of thought. What makes the question of democracy in industry germane to our subject is the fact that private competition in this and in most other countries is dying fast. Most of our big industries are dominated by trusts and rings: even where the great manufacturers have not a written agreement they have usually a secret understanding. It is utterly misleading to use the word competition any longer; it exists among small retailers when there is abundance of supply, but as applied to any of the great trades it is a complete misnomer. The trend of economic forces has stiffened the powers of monopoly. We used to revile America as the home of trusts, but now we have a large beam in our own eye.

If competition is truly dying, the alternatives that await us in the industrial world are either the control by the Trust or the control by the community, either monopolist Capitalism, surely the vilest system imaginable, or monopolist Collectivism. In either case centralisation becomes the dominant factor, but, if we are good democrats, we cannot face the prospect of further centralisation with equanimity To save us from

the Trusts the community must organise itself as a trading body and take over the means of production and distribution. It must nationalise but how is it going to administer? Centralised ownership may be a blessing, but centralised administration will be an unqualified curse. We all of us know the dead hand of Whitehall that clutches everything and moves nothing: we know it and we mean to avoid it. The only possible escape is devolution by function, the granting of responsible posts, not to externally appointed bureaucrats, but to men engaged in the industry. There is no hope for democracy if we set about our Socialism with the example of the Post Office as our guide, for this is nothing more or less than State Capitalism. Responsibility rests with the bureaucrats, and the postal servants have no superiority of status when compared with the ordinary wage-earner. The key to industrial democracy is neither high wages nor security of tenure: it is the distribution of power, so that every worker in the trade or craft feels that he is a human being and not a tool, a workman and not a machine, a self-governing individual and not the bondman of an overseer, a responsible public servant and not the implement of a profiteer. Socialism alone can fight Trusts, now that private competition has flickered out: but Socialism has in it the ingredients of a most intolerable oligarchy. It may be utterly regardless of both

producer and consumer: it may create a gigantic machine of government that will grind humanity to powder. Our only hope for democracy is to insist now and to insist always on respect for the human and individual element, and this insistence will find its natural expression in the demand for devolution. If the nation owns, then let it concede control (under certain limitations and the natural safeguards) to self-governing Guilds and let the Guilds themselves be models of devolution. This is of primary importance. If a Guild has a million members it may itself be an oligarchical institution, for size will have the same paralysing effect in the industrial as in the political sphere. Consequently, if the Guilds are to be democratic in a genuine sense of the word, they must be governed locally from below and not nationally from above. Only by granting the greatest amount of regional independence, by encouraging local spirit, and by conceding the maximum amount of workshop autonomy can the Guilds be erected on a democratic basis. Of course, if mankind refuses to be interested, and prefers beer to ballot-papers and backing winners to watching officials, the task is hopeless, the battle already lost. But the struggle is worth making and the risk a noble one. It is scarcely likely that the majority of the workers can be keen national guildsmen unless they are first keen local guildsmen, or that they can realise a general

freedom until they have first felt it in particular and trivial matters. Ultimately the success of democracy depends upon the stuff we are made of: that fact must be kept in mind relentlessly. But a reasonable organisation of society, with decentralisation as its guiding principle, may do a tremendous amount to help and encourage the minority who have not even to-day lost their aspirations for liberty. Devolution cannot of itself create democracy, but assuredly democracy cannot live without devolution.

The same is true of our national as opposed to our industrial interests. The levelling force of capitalism and increased travelling facilities have shattered local loyalties. Municipal politics are usually neglected. The proportion of voters that goes to the poll is preposterously small. At the L.C.C. elections in 1919 less than twenty per cent. of the electors considered the government of their city worth a journey to the poll. It is the same all over the country. Local politics which really do control important issues (what, for instance, could be more important that the composition of the local education committee ?) are treated with consummate apathy. The result is, naturally, that democracy becomes an empty name, and that people with axes to grind and interests to maintain easily impose themselves upon the electors and thus control local affairs in a most sinister manner. The state of affairs could

scarcely be more unsatisfactory. Here, it may reasonably be argued, is devolution at work and here devolution is a failure. But it is a very debateable point whether this assumption is justified. The devolution in this case has not been functional and it has not been thorough. The task of the local authority should be to deal with all those interests which men have in common as being residents of a particular locality. But only in certain districts have local authorities attempted to do this: in the majority of cases they have done as little as they possibly could. And it is just where the municipal authorities have the widest activities that most interest is shown in elections and most democratic spirit displayed. In fact, the argument drives us to believe that the remedy must be homœopathic. We do not need less devolution, but more of it.

The case for devolution in Parliamentary Government is overwhelming. A Federal Government for the United Kingdom (leaving out the thorny problem of Imperial Federation) with regional governments for Ulster and the rest of Ireland, for Scotland, for Wales, and possibly three or four divisions of England, would free the clogged machinery of administration and create new and valuable spheres for democratic activity. That vast units must be maintained to deal with our vast economic relations is conceded; but let

those vast units be federally constructed with a full amount of devolution, as in Australia for instance, and then there is some hope that the individual will not be driven to his present political despair by the conviction that he is an utterly powerless atom in a prodigious and almost boundless mass. If, along with functional devolution and self-government in industry, goes regional devolution, the best machinery will have been created for evoking a democratic response. The citizen would then have an elected body to deal with all his interests and those interests would be disentangled. A concrete example may help to make this plain. Let us take the case of Richard Roe, a railwayman, living in St. Pancras. He would have a share in the control of St. Pancras borough, of the London County Council, of the South Eastern Regional District (should it be found desirable to divide England into federal units) and of the United Kingdom, and thus in a remote degree of the League of Nations. In addition to that he would have a say in the management of his own railway-station, or of that branch of railway work in which he was engaged: he would be represented both on his local railway authority, on his divisional authority, and his national authority: he would have a share in the creation of the Local Trade Council and the Guild Congress. He might be linked up industrially with the railwaymen of other

countries, just as he is linked up politically in the League. If he happened to be a party politician, he would find representation of his views on local and national party committees and, if he were a Socialist, he would certainly be connected with the Socialists of other countries. Then he would have participation in any club or friendly society or co-operative society he chose to join, not to mention membership of a religious sect, or a secularist society, or a football team; or he might be interested in education and attend a weekly class. If devolution carried to this pitch did not make Richard Roe realise that democracy is something more than a specious title, then the fault would lie surely with Richard Roe. Such an outline of possibilities must give rise to one obvious criticism. "Richard Roe," it will be argued, "is only an ordinary and typical mortal. He works eight hours a day, or perhaps only six, if society has managed to organise its business more efficiently, and he comes home reasonably tired. He is probably married and a father: he is interested in his home and likes to see something of his wife and children. Or perhaps he prefers a pint of beer at his club. Anyhow, he wants to enjoy his leisure. Such a man will not want to be bothered with the eternal candidatures and committees and elections which devolutional democracy will thrust upon him. He simply will not have the energy to follow up all the manifold

interests you have described. As like as not he will become sick of the whole thing and refuse to go near a ballot-box. There is such a thing as counter-suggestion, and in this case excess of democracy will simply cause a revulsion of feeling and a distinct preference for music-halls over committee-rooms."

There is a great deal of truth in this protest. But no one would ever expect a citizen to take a deep interest and an active part in all these manifold concerns. One will prefer one aspect of life, one another. Richard Roe may be centred in his railway work, while John Doe is far more concerned with the administration of St. Pancras or the blunders of the London County Council. The vital point is that under devolutional democracy a man can follow up any department of life, and in that department he can feel himself to be a self-governing individual: he will have there the curse and the blessing of responsibility. In whichever direction he turns, he will be admitted as a man, not as a fraction of mechanism. At the present day his democratic activities are more or less limited to local and national politics, i.e., to regional and territorial affairs. His membership of a Trade Union is not membership of a responsible and governing body but of a fighting force whose value depends on the continuance of the industrial struggle. It is perfectly obvious that no amount of constitutional

machinery can make a good democrat of Richard Roe if he prefers to devote his entire leisure to "spotting winners." But it is equally plain that constitutional machinery can do a good deal to put Richard Roe in a position where he can be a good democrat if he chooses.

The state has long been jealous of associations within its borders. It has wished to retain full sovereignty in its own hands, and it has echoed the sentiments of Thomas Hobbes, who urged that all such associations should be drastically purged away as being worms in the entrails of Leviathan. But Leviathan is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. It has proved, in fact, to be a clumsy and a blundering monster, utterly incapable of varied and delicate motion. Accordingly, it must undergo a salutary course of vivisection. We have no animus against the colossal governmental unit; indeed, we have admitted its imperative necessity with the world moving as it is. But our only safeguard against the tyranny of the administrative machine is constant decentralisation. If this process could lead us back to craftmanship, and the living small community embedded in the larger groups, so much the better: whether we shall ever master the machines that we devised as our industrial servants and admitted to industrial tyranny remains to be seen. But, passing over the question of mediævalism, we have, in our modern

conditions, a cogent cause for endeavouring to make a reality of democracy. The word is bruited abroad as the medicine of all our discontents; obviously, it is not in itself a panacea, but, equally obviously, it has a tremendous appeal for humanity. If men are prepared to suffer and die for their ideal, it is the duty of all of us to rescue it from the destruction with which the Great Community threatens it. While the economic and political forces of the day are moving towards a centralisation that would make democracy a mere shadow, the moral and intellectual forces are relying more and more upon this democracy. Somehow or other, democracy must be grafted upon a unified World Control. It is a tremendous task, and it can only be accomplished if we stop using pleasant phrases and determine to set our own house in order. Devolutional democracy may seem to be infinitely complex, and perhaps infinitely dangerous; it may lead us to confusion on the question of sovereignty, and run us into the risk of anarchy. But we have to choose between the risk of anarchy and the risk of Cæsarism. Rome made that choice in her history, and she chose Cæsarism with peace. But the peace of Cæsar was the peace of death, and the centralised administration of that vast empire was the prelude to a lingering decay and complete eclipse. If we accept the risk

of anarchy and attempt our schemes of devolution, we are at least working on one irrefutable principle, that democracy, like many other good things, begins at home.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Democratic Idea

Secularists have often ridiculed religion on the grounds that those who bow the knee to a divinity cannot, as a rule, give the vaguest description of their god, or what they imagine him to resemble. That may or may not be the case, but, whether the criticism holds good or not of worshippers, it is certainly true of many democrats. The persons who cry out most loudly, and most often, in praise of democracy, are the least ready to delineate the features of the goddess. They will not adventure themselves upon her anatomy or analyse her chemical constitution. Perhaps they may regard it as flat blasphemy to treat ideals in this gross manner of materialism. Well, let them continue to cry aloud; but they will find when they are hoarse and weary, that they are the best friends of tyranny. For while they are singing pæans, the autocrat is staking out his claims; while they are mumbling their shibboleths, he is setting his chains upon the world. Idealism, which alone can save the world, can most easily destroy it. There is only a slight gulf between vision and blindness,

for those who see farthest, and those who can see nothing at all, are often alike idealists. If the idealism of democracy is to save us it must be tempered with the hard thinking of the practical democrat, whose thought is not divorced from action. The tragedy of man is summed up in the famous lines:

> The wise want love, and those who love want wisdom,
> And all good things are thus confused to ill.

Accordingly, it is the duty of every man who thinks or speaks or writes about democracy to have some clear notion of what he means by the democratic ideal. What does the phrase imply, and how far are we justified in using it? This is plainly not a subject on which demonstrable results or a complete agreement can be reached, but we may achieve a certain clarity of thought by limiting its scope. The democratic ideal may be defined as consisting of three primary conceptions: the philosophy of will, the philosophy of fellowship, and the philosophy of responsibility. Individual taste may add other ideas to these, for every man is free to make what he chooses of democracy, but under these headings will probably fall whatever is essential to the philosophy of people's power.

a THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILL

Democracy we saw to be the assumption of

political and legal sovereignty by the ultimate general sovereign, i.e., the people. Under an autocratic or oligarchic government, the masses allow others to rule for them, partly through laziness, partly through ignorance, and partly through fear of innovation, and the common acceptance of tradition. Under a democratic government, the individuals who compose the community take over the machinery of administration, and, adopting usually a representative system, work it for themselves. It is this notion of will that is peculiar to democracy, and must therefore be considered as the absolute basis of the democratic ideal. We come at once upon two distinct and irreconcilable attitudes to government. One side maintains that the actual results are of primary importance.

> For forms of government let fools contest,
> Whate'er is best administered is best.

That is to say, that the function of the ruler is to create by any means the happiness of the ruled. If we can guarantee peace and plenty for the subjects, then that is an ideal form of government, and that is the end of it. If the many have any sense they will realise their good fortune and remain the passive recipients of bureaucratic benevolence. This faith is common both to dictators and to oligarchs. Sometimes a governing class or caste maintains its hold on power by

creating a general confidence that this class or caste has a monopoly of political knowledge, and that, since the task of administration is so intricate as to need special training and aptitudes, only those in the magic circle can prescribe and procure the welfare of the common herd. This conception, which is usually accompanied by an entire contempt for liberty as a political ideal, is not limited to the militarists and the " dam-you-ram-you " Tories. It is the fundamental idea of Plato's Republic and is still commonly held by English Collectivists, whose view of Socialism is the capture of the governmental machinery by a policy of permeation, and the imposition on the workers from above of a mass of rules and regulations which represent the Higher Wisdom of blue books and bureaucrats. The supporters of secret diplomacy maintain the same dangerous pretensions about the intricacy of their problems, and the depth of their own wisdom, but they can scarcely claim that they have produced very satisfactory results. If the justification of bureaucracy is efficient public service, then secret diplomacy must certainly be found guilty. At other times the claim of supreme wisdom is made not for a class, but for an individual. This cult of Cæsarism has been common throughout the ages and often popular. Julius Cæsar justified his unconstitutional actions on the ground that constitutional government was

carrying Rome to ruin, and that he could by a dictatorship restore order and create a general level of security and contentment for the community. This he did actually achieve, and, if we are to use the sole criterion of material results, the Roman Empire was probably a happier place than the Roman Republic. Cæsarism is quite possible in a country where there are the forms of democratic government. The General Election of 1918 was fought largely on the personal issue of Mr. Lloyd George's character and capacity; he demanded to be sent back to office with a pledged and servile majority to carry out any line of policy that might come into his head. He demanded, that is to say, a dictatorship to deal with an exceptional situation, and his request was granted. The people of Great Britain, being at once tired out with the war, elated with victory, and confused by the enormous problems to be faced, gladly ceded their powers of self-direction to a man who certainly never shrinks from responsibility. Here is a plain case of the abnegation of the will to self-government, and the temporary toleration of Cæsarist methods. The democrat on the other hand argues that what really matters is just the element of will and that it is far better for people to do things for themselves than to have them done for them. The Cæsarist lays all his emphasis on his results; he divorces the happiness created

by an action from the action itself. But to the democrat this is impossible. He maintains that the value of the happiness depends upon the way it has been won, and is largely conditioned by the participation in the act of winning it. In other words, he claims that it is better for the community to assume responsibility, to make its own efforts towards self-government, and to struggle on through blunders to its goal, than to sit down quietly and to hire experts to come and undertake its administration as they might contract for a business order. Quite apart from the fact that experts are often frauds, and make a far greater mess of their work than would an ordinary 'bus-driver if called to cabinet rank, it is thus seen that the British process of "muddling through" is well in the democratic tradition. It would be ridiculous to say that democratic government is necessarily muddled, but it is quite fair to say that, even if it is muddled, this does not by any means settle the question. It all comes back to a point of ultimate values. Which is preferable : to govern yourself and to do it only moderately well, or to sit down passively and to have it done for you ? The answer, surely, will depend on the nature of the operation in question. If it is something purely material, like having your hair cut, or your teeth drawn, then there can be no possible reason for refusing expert assistance, unless the charges are too heavy

for the nature of the service rendered. No spiritual benefit can be gained from wasting time with the scissors and cutting your hair off in patches, or from attaching a piece of cotton to your tooth and pulling hard. But government is not a purely material question. Where it is purely material, as in the provision of drains, it is certainly best to place an expert in charge. But in the direction of policy, in the choice of ends, not of means, in choosing the kind of life and the kind of happiness that the community should strive for, government becomes a spiritual affair. And here it is indubitably better that the individual should act for himself than that he should be continually led from above. This is not a preference that can be proved to be either right or wrong; it is a question of taste. But in the dispute the true democrats will all be on one side. To them the development of personality by choice and the assertion of will is essential. It is just this which makes the really free man and distinguishes him from what Shakespeare calls the "base mechanicals." Democracy is a philosophy not only for corporate bodies, but for the individual. If he prefers to sleep away his life with the pleasant faith that his hireling politicians will play policeman, he is at liberty to do so. If, on the other hand, he prefers to shape issues for himself, to show himself a free and responsible person in choice

and action, to control as far as he can the conditions of his labour, and the amenities of his local life, then he may toil and sweat in vain, he may encounter disappointment and disaster, but, should he obtain success, his exhilaration will far exceed in quality the placid happiness of the drowsy underlings of Cæsar. And, even in the ups and downs of his career, even when things look blackest, he will have at any rate the reward of fine emotions and deep convictions, the sense, for instance, that he is doing something worth while in accepting the challenge of life, which will counter-balance those material blessings which the subservient cult of efficiency might have made his own. This may be a rough and inadequate outline of the feelings of the democrat who has considered the fundamental implications of his creed.

b THE PHILOSOPHY OF FELLOWSHIP

Few words are more open to abuse than "fellowship." It is the key-note of much hazy benevolence, the focus of much vague goodwill. If it is not to become a meaningless compilation of letters, we must be careful to give it a most precise content. It must become the ingredient of a clear cut philosophy as well as the atmosphere of a faith. "All good things come from the heart," but as Lord Morley pertinently adds, "they must go round by the head." Certainly the furious fellowship of the sentimental orator is

better for mankind than the furious misanthropy of the realist Jingo. But, while the latter results usually in the desired bloodshed, the former remains often only in the sonorous state of signifying nothing. No man deserves less than William Morris the name of empty sentimentalist; his thought was as deep as his feeling, and his passion for democracy was beyond reproach. His words on fellowship are often quoted and ring like music in the brain.

"Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is heaven, and the lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life, and the lack of fellowship is death; and the deeds that ye do upon the earth it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them. . . . Therefore, I tell you that the proud despiteous rich man, though he knoweth it not, is in hell already, because he hath no fellow; and he that hath so hardy a heart that in sorrow he thinketh of fellowship, his sorrow is soon but a story of sorrow, a little change in the life that knows not ill."—*The Dream of John Ball.*

Morris was not the man to use words for words' sake, and in him was a reasoned philosophy of fellowship; and we, if we are to use this noble word, must have our own interpretation of its meaning.

Democratic thought implies equality, because the only practical method of dividing power and sovereignty among the people is on a basis of equality. By acknowledging the principle

of equality, we acknowledge also the principle of Right, not necessarily a system of conflicting and arbitrary Natural Rights, but a universal right to have rights. But if we accept the rights of man, we must also accept the rights of men. By espousing the cause of democracy, we commit ourselves to fellowship, in as far as we allow that one man is just as good or as bad as another. Democracy in the true sense dies with the admission of class and race superiority. Obviously all men are not alike, and white is different from black, but that is no ground for a rigid stratification. The United States of America, founded ostensibly on democratic principles, tolerated chattel slavery for a considerable period, and to this day the Southern States have allowed one law for the white man and another for the black. Plainly in this case democracy has not carried fellowship in its pocket; and we may be right in our view that this does not prove fellowship to be stupid, but Southerners to be queer democrats. A consistent American in a recent book called "Americanised Socialism," argues his case for Socialism purely on the grounds that it is the logical development of Americanism. The individualist interpretation of democratic principles he holds to be misleading; the equalitarian interpretation has reason on its side and leads us straight away from competitive Capitalism to industrial co-operation.

The first implication then of fellowship is the abnegation of individualism, whether commercial or national. It is an odd confusion that has connected nationalism with democracy, for nationalism is nearly always aggressive and rapacious. The Italian nationalists (with the "sacred egoism" of their imperial policy) are under no delusions about fellowship; sometimes they break into delightful humbug, as when they claim to annex Albania "in order to save it from the rapacity of others," but for the most part the nationalists of Italy are honest annexationists of the good old-fashioned school. Nationalism may, of course, be purely a movement for self-determination, but it very rarely stops there; at the best, however, it is a narrow creed and hard to combine with the ideals of democracy. For, if once we pledge ourselves to fellowship, then the concept of internationalism and of the widest human fellowship follows immediately. "You cannot indict a whole nation," said Edmund Burke. Unfortunately, we can, and do, but the results are disastrous for common sense and for democracy. In the same way, class domination is as fatal to fellowship as racial domination; only the outer shell of democracy can exist in a plutocratic community. So long as the terrible weapon of wealth is used to promote inequality and to segregate possessors and possessed, so long is

democracy, however perfect in form the political machinery may be, a most piteous farce and a jest for cynics. By economic fellowship, we do not necessarily mean that every one must have the same income to a penny, but we do imply that the deep chasms in society destroy all possibility of a genuine democracy. Wage-slavery differs from chattel-slavery in some respects, but it falls into the same category, relying as it does upon a division of the community into two classes with utterly conflicting interests. The Radical democrats of a hundred years ago believed that if only men were released from class barriers and left to fight for themselves under fair conditions, they would know their greatest good, and achieve it; but they were wrong, tragically wrong. Like the Americans, they stressed the libertarian aspect of democracy, and their "liberty" has put the world in chains. The truth is that liberty without fraternity is worth nothing, and that competition, naturally destroying equality, destroys all hope of fellowship. Plenty of well-intentioned people argue that it is possible for the rich and the poor to be friends. Perhaps, but is a friendship based on servitude worthy of the name? Is it worth while talking of brotherhood when the poor are always to be the younger brothers? Fellowship demands national and international co-operation and, if democracy demands fellowship, then as

democrats we must turn our backs resolutely upon the old ideals of domination and competition.

We turn, then, in our pursuit of democracy, to co-operation as against competition, to production for common use as against production for private profit. Fellowship makes a big challenge to mankind. We have been reared in the old tradition, with commercialism laughing Christianity out of court and swords glorified before ploughshares. It will be no light task to smash this vile tradition and to instil in the common consciousness an entirely new set of motives. The task of democracy is no less than this. At present we have democratic institutions, which imply fellowship, grafted on to an individualist civilisation, which implies rivalry; as a result we have plenty of institutions and very little democracy. The only remaining policy is a move towards co-operation and an unblushing acknowledgment of the common sense of fellowship. At last men are beginning to see that unless we make an end of war in commercial and in national relations war will make an end of us. In other words, after centuries of suffering, men may come to see that honesty is the best policy and that fellowship may actually pay.

What one means by saying that "fellowship pays" is simply that if we do things together for a common purpose we shall probably do them better than if we entrust them to the mercies of

private enterprise and the commercial conscience. We may make many blunders, for no system is fool-proof, but we could scarcely do worse than our fathers with their legacy of slums, shoddy, and disease. Doubtless some individuals, hard-grained commercialists, will take advantage of the public confidence that is the basis of co-operation, but on the whole it is likely that men will work better for the absence of rivalry. There are many who think that any association of people for a common purpose creates a new personality which transcends the personalities of all the individuals making up the group, that there is a general will more "real" than the individual wills, and this new person is altogether more important than Tom, Dick, and Harry. This conception, founded on a very doubtful parallel drawn between the individual and the community and backed with some dangerous use of the word "organism," should be examined with meticulous care. It is eagerly adopted by superior persons who at once assert themselves as "the brain" of the New Person, and claim the right of telling the various limbs and muscles what they are to do. It is in fact a doctrine that is admirably suited as a justification of the servile state and of bureaucratic tyranny, and should be considered in the light of its results. But, while the justification for constructing a new social "person" with a general will of its own is more than

debatable, it is plainly true that co-operative action produces certain peculiar effects. The emotion of a crowd is greater than the emotion of all the crowd-makers taken individually and summed up, because the individuals react upon one another. Thus the good-will of a co-operative commonwealth might be greater than the massed good-will of many isolated people; the very fact of co-operation, the existence of a common purpose, elicits loyalties and ardours and activities that the cold atmosphere of individualism would have destroyed. Association for a social end may not create a "new person," but it certainly does create a tradition or a complex of ideas which is of extreme value. It passes from one man to another, both giving inspiration to them and drawing inspiration from them. Oxford University, for instance, is a historic voluntary association of people with a definite purpose; whether it forms "a real person" is disputed, but undeniably it has a common tradition and outlook, in which all newcomers may participate, to which they may add, or from which they may detract. The "idea of Oxford" is caught up by Oxford men and passed on; and so with other fundamental institutions. Co-operative purpose, in other words fellowship in work and life, is of immense value as a stimulant of loyalty and as a challenge to abilities. It appeals to the creative side of our nature, not the acquisitive

and destructive. A community which was rich in these co-operative purposes, these floating traditions of fellowship and these legacies of achievement, would certainly be far happier than one bound by the monotonous and barren creed of competition. And it would also be far more democratic.

c THE PHILOSOPHY OF RESPONSIBILITY

Thoughtless people often regard democracy as a great distributive benefactress, pouring unstinted happiness from her miraculous horn of plenty. They are the counterpoint of those dreary martinets who are for ever talking about discipline. The former think only in terms of rights, the latter only in terms of duties; whereas sanity demands that we should think in terms of both. Rights and duties are co-relative and if democracy brings equality of opportunity, it also brings equality of responsibility. The gift of freedom is like the gift of a bicycle; it is a doubtful blessing until we have learned to ride it. The right to vote, for instance, without the ability to vote, is simply no guarantee of freedom whatever. The owner of that vote will not possess the full power of choice and of criticism; his mind will wander at the mercy of the falsehoods and catchwords set to ensnare him by the daily papers. That perhaps is why the possessing classes, once so shy of extending the suffrage, are now so ready to see it distributed broadcast. They

know that the mere tenure of a vote means nothing at all, or at most very little. What really matters is the mind of the voter. If the mass of the people remains receptive of any trash and utterly incapable of getting behind words to the things they should represent, people's power can never be realised. Power will remain in the hands of those who control the formation of public opinion, in the hands, that is to say, of Press barons, theatre and music-hall proprietors, cinema plutocrats, and cheap fiction writers. There is only one force that can guarantee true democracy, and that is education.

By education we do not mean the study of text-books or a diligent application to mathematics. We mean the training of critical powers, the creation, if you will, of a healthy scepticism. So long as the many are worshippers of words, and do not realise that they are bowing the knee to empty symbols, so long will the word-wizards hold the throne. But when the majority begins to ask for the realities that lie beneath the symbols, for the facts that are hidden in the phrases, for the translation into human experience and human happiness of the magniloquent headlines of the papers, hope dawns for democracy. At present people are crushed beneath institutions and things are buried beneath words; the world cries out for a double act of liberation. Good-will, essential though it be to our salvation, cannot

save us by its own unaided effort. Not until there is a universal level of critical intelligence and an ability to get at general principles below the multitudes of facts, will there be a real liberty in which the mind of man can find free choice. Education is a vague word, but the side of education which is most important to-day is that wherein tutor and student meet as equals and are prepared by lecture, question, and discussion to forge out their attitude on all social and economic problems. The vital point is that there should be the spoken word in public and the written word in private; the student can adopt the Socratic method and hammer away at his tutor until all terms are defined and mutually agreed upon; then, later on, he should put on paper his own views and discover for himself in the travail of private composition whether his own ideas are so clear and strong in his mind that they demand spontaneous expression.

Nothing could be more disastrous than the educational plan which simply flings a text-book at the child or adult and tells him to "learn" it. This inevitably perpetuates the tyranny of words. Most text-books of English history are either compendia of trivialities or else extremely partial accounts of national glory. To "learn" them is to risk a plethora of ill-digested puerilities or of actual falsehoods. But, it may be argued, at this rate a man won't learn anything; if he

only learns his own ignorance, if he knows what he does not know, if he realises the vast complexity of issues and forbears to heal the agony of nations with a catch-word, he is well on the road to true knowledge. He has at least emancipated himself from the idols of the phrase-market, and can set to work to discover the true gods for himself. What is most needed in this country to-day is a new Socratic method with a band of young Socratics, who should contribute a large share of the adult education of the nation. Only by a resolute effort to make words definite and issues clear can the muddy national thought of our day be filtered and made clean. In the meanwhile every teacher and every student, young or old, who makes of education a searchlight on reality, is the genuine servant of democracy. For such men and women are building a society in which freedom has a bulwark, where the right to choose is fortified by the capacity to choose, and liberty of thought is made manifest in free and powerful thinking. Democracy imposes upon us not only the duty of thinking for ourselves, but also of seeing that the whole community is in a position to think for itself. An uneducated democracy is a contradiction in terms, for the simple reason that power will remain with those who can manufacture opinion at their will.

In the second place, democracy brings with it the responsibility for drudgery, for hard,

unremitting work. If people determine to do their share of government for themselves instead of handing it over to Cæsar, they must be conscious of the severity of their task. "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance," and eternal vigilance is a big demand to make. If democracy is to be a thorough and a successful method of administration in every sphere of life, every individual must be prepared to play his part. Each man must be ready to investigate the various problems before him and to choose with real care his representatives for political, industrial, and social bodies. Above all, he must at least take the trouble to vote. At nearly all modern elections, both for political and industrial purposes, not half the electorate will undergo the trivial fatigue and nuisance of making a decision. Such indolence is absolutely destructive of democracy. It makes smooth the way for the wire-puller, the caucus, and the party boss. It reveals an apathy which encourages the self-seeker to impose himself upon an electorate that takes no thought for the morrow. It makes government by consent of the governed a pure matter of form. At the present time, in all centres of population in this country, the democratic machinery is kept moving by small groups of energetic people. It will be found that the same man is on the Town Council, on the Trades Council, on the Education Committee, and even secretary of his own Trade

Union branch. There is far more work to do than can possibly be done by this handful of people, who are sacrificing their hard-earned share of leisure and often their health in toiling for the apathetic and ungrateful majority. They deserve the highest praise for their efforts, since they do realise that democracy is a matter of spade-work, but, until the others come up to take their turn, democracy must suffer and suffer heavily.

It is admitted that most men come home tired from their work, and that the work of women in the home is never done. It may be impossible for all men and women to keep themselves adequately informed on the questions of the day, or even on the questions that touch their own interests most closely, but the fact that in every centre some individuals have already done so much for democracy shows that much more could be achieved if all took up only a tiny share of the enormous civic burden. The gross unfairness of the present distribution of effort is an obvious iniquity. The basis of the general apathy is not, however, a selfish desire to shove the work on to the other man, but a real ignorance about the amount and the importance of the work to be done. Democracy has been so long preached as a gospel of rights that few people bother their heads about duties. They have accepted the fatal tradition that government means getting things done for you; that is quite right, if you

also accept Cæsarism. But you cannot fairly clamour for democracy and then look round for some self-sacrificing individual to do all the work. If he is not forthcoming, the self-interested individual certainly will not fail to put in an appearance. And then at once democracy breaks down; for democracy demands not only a high level of general intelligence, but also a high level of honesty and energy. The corruption of the best is worst, and no form of government is so debased as an apathetic, corrupt, and ignorant democracy. The nation which determines to achieve a full and genuine democracy accepts a tremendous challenge; there will be no limit to its labour and no respite from its responsibilities. But the more formidable the task, the more is it worth doing.

Such words may savour of the sermon and be set down as the platitudes of the preacher. Yet, stale as they are, the time demands them. Democracy is on the lips of all and in the minds of few. It is, let us face the fact, a dangerous word. It means too much. To Edward Carpenter, in his "Towards Democracy," it is the vaguest, if noblest, of ideals, a compound of human fraternity and a dislike of railway engines. To one man it means Parliamentary Government, to another Industrial Unionism. We have a National Democratic Party fighting the Labour Party, and are faced with the entertaining spectacle of a world